

**Looking For “Elizabeth”:
A Feminist Religious Education for Empowering
Women’s Self-Identity**

A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of the
Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Hyun Sun Oh Hong

May 2004

© 2004

Hyun Sun Oh Hong

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED


This dissertation, written by

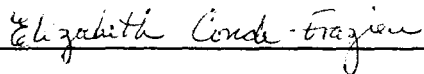
Hyun Sun Oh Hong

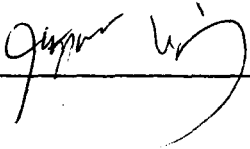
*under the direction of her Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented to and
accepted by the Faculty of the Claremont School of
Theology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty Committee


Chairperson


Elizabeth Conde-Tragion



5/14/04
Date

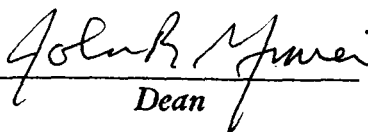

Dean

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Motivation	1
A Story of “Mary” and “Elizabeth”	5
The Problem, Purpose, and Methods of the Dissertation	7
 Chapter 2: Critiques of Theories Related to Feminist Religious Education for Empowering Women of Poverty	 16
A Dialogue with Minjung Theology	18
Insights from Minjung Theology	20
Minjung Theologians’ Definitions of Minjung	24
A Critique of Minjung Theology from the Gender Perspective	28
A Dialogue with Western Feminist Religious Education Theory	36
Insights from Western Feminist Religious Education	37
A Critique of Western Feminist Religious Education	43
A Dialogue with Asian Feminist Theology	57
Insights from Asian Feminist Theology	58
A Critique of Asian Feminist Theology	65

The Situation of Religious Education in Korea from the Class and Gender Perspective	67
Chapter 3: Who is “Mary?”: A Description of Women of Poverty	71
Description of Methodology and Interviews	71
Description of Women and Shelters	74
Mary(s) in Korea	80
Outcasts: Women in Shelters and Foreign Migrant Women Laborers	83
Women in Multiple Crises	88
Children of Broken Families Living in Poverty	93
Women who Voluntarily Choose Poverty	97
Chapter 4: Mary’s Dream and Its Value	103
Living Like Ordinary People	103
Searching for an Alternative Family	108
Acquiring Economic Independence	112
Knowing Who I Am	117
Chapter 5: Looking for Elizabeth: A Feminist Religious Education for Empowering Women of Poverty	123

Biblical Meaning of Self-Identity Education for Women of Poverty	123
Recovering God's Image	128
Becoming "Elizabeth"	131
Planting a Mustard Seed	135
The Re-Birth with True Self	138
Looking for Elizabeth: A Feminist Religious Education for Empowering Women of Poverty	142
Principles of Education	143
Purpose	150
Process and Practicing	155
Identifying Thirst for Change: Motivated Participants	156
Awakening to Reality: Social Analysis	162
Expulsion of the Myth: Getting Self Back	168
Finding of Hope: Commitment to Action	176
Chapter 6: Conclusion	187
Appendix	194
Bibliography	195

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Motivation

The year 1982 was very special for me because my perspectives on Korean society up until that time were totally challenged during that critical year. In 1982 I came to doubt everything that I had previously learned from school, society, and church. I did not realize that my society was fragmented with many opposing concepts—the oppressors and the oppressed, the rich and the poor, capitalism and communism, the educated and the non-educated—until I, as a teacher, met manual laborers in a night class. Some of my friends and I found a place for night classes in order to teach laborers in one of the major industrial areas in Seoul in 1982. Initially, I simply wanted to share my knowledge, time, and Christian faith with them. Teaching literacy and subjects equivalent to the curriculum of middle school, using college students as teachers, I helped them pass a national certificate examination. It turned out that we shared not only knowledge to pass an exam but also the stories of our lives.

It was hard, emotionally and spiritually, to hear their stories. One of the laborers in the night class was the eldest among eight children in her family of ten. She finished her elementary school in her hometown and, at the age of 16, left home to make money in Seoul to support her family. She did everything

except prostitution to survive. Finally, she got a job in an electronic factory working more than 12 hours a day. Her face was pale from exhaustion and lack of sun, her fingers were cut and bruised from sewing machine accidents and nosebleeds were common. Her story of hardship and overwork was also true for all the laborers in our classes. The more I heard their stories, the more my naive sympathy for the poor, my faith in God, my common knowledge gained from twelve years of school were shaken to their roots. I came to doubt everything that I learned, believed, and trusted.

At that time, the dictator and his running dogs arrested as political offenders so many people involved in social justice movements, drafted to military services college students who participated in the student movement for democracy, controlled organs of expression while they boasted that they would build a "society of justice." Anyone who resisted this political power was regarded as a communist. I was one of those who suffered and survived a long, dark tunnel of government oppression due to my active participation in student democratic demonstrations and laborers' human rights movement. Those days transformed my views and the future of my life. I had to rethink God, society, and history.

Time went by and the laborers we taught began to pass the exam. However, something was wrong. They realized that even passing the exam did not change anything, did not make their lives better. It was not possible for them

to continue their higher education, since their priority was to make money to alleviate the poverty of their parents and siblings in their hometown. One day, they suggested changing the curriculum of the night class. They wanted to learn something related to their real lives, such as the Labor Union Act, Chinese characters, and English. (At that time Korean newspapers were printed in Chinese characters so that laborers could not read newspapers, which meant that they were unable to obtain current information about society. In addition, many industrial products were labeled in English.)

Soon afterward, our night class and its members became objects of police surveillance, their oppression affecting us in several ways. The church where we gathered for the night class asked us to evacuate their building. We tried to find other places, but every church we asked denied us access to even a small room. In the basement under a small shoe factory we dug a small classroom with no window. Teachers and laborers, including me were under surveillance from police and this caused me to suffer nightmares every night. I had to burn my diaries, books, and papers to keep from the police. My home church, my college, even my parents urged me to give up the social movement. However, I left my home church instead of leaving my friends and a calling from God. The laborers and I who participated in the night class did not have any place where we felt safe. Finally, we decided to build a church and started a Bible study. Religious organizations and churches were relatively safe from the

dictatorship at that time. In fact, the church was the only safe place to gather together and we needed to be able to provide a degree of comfort for all of us. The laborers were not necessarily Christian or unbelievers although many of the teachers were Christian. The students trusted their teachers so laborers agreed to participate.

We named this church 'Deedeem Dol,' meaning a stepping-stone. We shared a Sunday worship service, prayer meeting, and Bible study. We were not afraid of anything when we were together even though police oppression continued. Because I was still a college student I could not be appointed pastor of a church. Therefore, we searched for someone who had a will to commit to this small, poor church and someone came. Woo Kyung Kang has ministered to this Minjung church from 1985 until today.

I decided to continue my theological studies and entered the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary in Seoul in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program.

Remembering those difficult times, I think of all of us as "Marys and Elizabeths" to each other because we offered each other comfort for the individual pains we suffered from financial difficulty and political oppression and we encouraged each other not to give up our visions for a better society and future. At that time, however, I did not realize the significance of the fact that all those in the night class were young women. I simply regarded them as laborers.

We were all preoccupied with the class issues of the student movement as we struggled against severe military dictatorship and unjust labor practices and capitalism. Nobody pointed out to me that it was poor women -- women laborers -- who suffered most in our society. Only when I started working as a member and staff in the Association of Korean Feminist Theologians in 1989 did my eyes open to a new perspective and I was thrilled to read about the voices of feminist theologians from the Western world.

From these transforming experiences, issues of class and gender became the main threads of my theological tapestry and the stepping-stones for my faith journey. This dissertation is an expression of my continuing commitment as a religious educator to the liberation of women of poverty. It is also an ardent prayer of solidarity with them.

My work addresses the need to articulate a feminist theory of religious education which aims to liberate women of poverty in Korea. The main theme of my dissertation is the formation of a pedagogical theory for practical religious education that addresses their needs, their struggles, and their hopes for a better future.

A Story of “Mary” and “Elizabeth”

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child

you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.¹

In the opening chapter of Luke's Gospel in the New Testament, the relationship between Elizabeth and Mary is revealed. Mary, who was deeply troubled by an angel's message that she would conceive and give birth to a child while still a virgin, sought comfort from another woman, her cousin Elizabeth, who took her in and accepted and embraced her. Elizabeth provided sanctuary for Mary, blessed her, fed her and encouraged her to find her own voice through her unique song, Mary's Magnificat.

There are many poor Korean women who need help like Mary. I will name each of them Mary. Like Mary in the Gospel of Luke, poor and needy women in Korean society are looking for Elizabeth. The Korean Church could be Elizabeth's house in which Mary felt accepted and comfortable, and feminist

¹ Luke 1:29-56 (NIV).

religious education should be Elizabeth for them, giving them the words to sing their own unique song. My dissertation is not simply a story about Mary and Elizabeth of Korea, but is an urgent invitation to solidarity with them.

The Problem, Purpose and Methods of the Dissertation

Since the first arrival of missionaries in 1885, Korean Christianity has recorded tremendous growth, one of the largest in the history of world mission.²

Today, it is estimated that more than 20% of the entire country (South Korea) is Christian. Of that total, women make up two-thirds. The churches in Korea, however, are slow to respond, if indeed they respond at all to social justice issues, including feminist issues. In the ministry of the church, women are excluded from leadership and decision-making, and there is no theological education related to women's issues in the church.

Korean churches pay no attention to "women's studies" and "feminist education." That is even more true when it comes to women of poverty. Women are grouped together in general adult education classes without special consideration being given to gender or their specific context. There is currently no theory of religious education based upon poor women's particularity and reality in the Korean churches.

² Sang Tae Hong, *A Historical Investigation of Missionaries to Korea and Their Influence on Modern Korean Protestantism* (M.A. thesis, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif., 1998), 1.

In Chapter 2, I would like to write about some theories that have nurtured me as a theologian and educator. Insightful challenges that I have been influenced and critiques that I want to point out from these theories will be discussed. Especially, their limitations will be developed from the perspective of feminist religious education for Korean women of poverty. These theories are Minjung theology, Western feminist religious education theory, and Asian feminist theology.

Minjung theology. Minjung theology, which is known for its emphasis on liberation of the poor, does not pay any attention to women from a feminist perspective. Women of poverty and their issues are not given any special attention nor are they considered important in matters of the church and theology, even in Minjung theology. Raising gender consciousness in Minjung theology would without question make possible a richer and more relevant theological discourse.

Western feminist religious education theory. The women's liberation movement in the West has presented many feminist theories, including theory of religious education. Western feminists have made important contributions to women's issues and feminist perspectives. They have raised critical thinking and also provided approaches to women's issues. Yet, when they speak of women's issues and feminist perspectives, they speak only of gender consciousness. And, thus, there is little relevance for a feminist theory of

religious education for Korean women who are caught in the web of poverty.

This dissertation is an attempt to articulate just such a feminist theory of religious education by building upon their ideas that address gender and adding to them the dimension of class consciousness.

Asian feminist theology. Asian feminist theologians have done much to uncover the male biases that dominate Korean theology. Asian feminist theologians argue that oppressed and marginalized women in Asia need to participate in their own liberation through the re-building of a theological and experiential perspective. However, they do not develop an educational tool to communicate these feminist ideas and perspectives to the female members of their congregations.

In the situation as described above, this present study is a pioneering work, the goal of which is to present an urgent demand for the Korean church to create a feminist religious education program for women of poverty in order to help them to be liberated, and thereby help bring renewal to the Korean church and society.

This dissertation proposes to design a theory of feminist religious education which aims to help women of poverty in Korea liberate themselves. It will be the formation of a pedagogical theory for practical religious education for them. The women of poverty have the potential to bring about the liberation of Korean women in the church because they have suffered the most from financial

hardships (for example, those incurred by economic disaster a few years ago which caused the Korean government to borrow money heavily from the International Monetary Fund), and the age-long patriarchal social structure that is oppressive of women in general.

Having learned to survive through these adverse circumstances, the poor women of Korea possess the most practical force to bring about transformation because of the strength and wisdom they have accumulated over the last few hundred years. Once they are allowed to realize this potential and are freed to share their stories, experiences, and wisdom, they will be empowered to push the liberative force beyond the personal. Working together, women of poverty will have enormous power, presenting an irresistible challenge to oppressive powers. This is precisely what a feminist theory of religious education proposed in this study will do. To listen to the voices of women and help them speak out from their places of suffering without fear is essentially the beginning of feminist religious education in Korea.

In this work, I utilize two methods to support my thesis. The first method involves interviews with Korean women of poverty and activists who are working in solidarity with them. In the summer of 2002, I traveled to South Korea and visited men's and women's shelters, Minjung churches, children's shelters and local institutions that advocate for the causes of people in poverty including foreign illegal laborers. I interviewed 8 activists and 25 women.

Relating to these interviews, I will describe the methodology in greater detail in Chapter 3. Also my internship which was done in a Korean Minjung church two years ago will provide a mirror to reflect my thesis that embodies Korean women's reality and their hope.

The second method is an analysis of written materials produced by various institutions and organizations which support the poor in Korea and a critical review of existing literature and the communication of other authors' perspectives from Minjung theology, Asian feminist theology, and Western feminist religious education.

After describing in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 of my dissertation will identify the Mary(s) in Korea. The women of poverty are the outcasts, the children of broken poor families, and women exposed to multiple crises. First, outcasts are identified as those who are victims of bankruptcy, domestic violence, alcohol abuse, morbid suspicion of a wife's chastity, child abuse, sexual abuse, illicit intercourse, and so on. For these women the only way to survive in these crises is to escape with the children from their husbands and their homes. Other victims include foreign women laborers who come from South-East Asia. They have struggled under circumstances of illegal status, low wages, and sexual discrimination, and are subject to inhumane treatment as slaves. These women whom I met were living in shelters and group homes supported by Christian churches and centers.

Second, I need to include children of broken families in the category of “women of poverty.” Because of the parents’ miserable situations, nobody cares for the children. They are exposed to dangerous situations of malnutrition, school drop-out, prostitution, gang activities and just as important they suffer from low self-esteem. They are trapped in a vicious circle of poverty. They need care and educational support.

The third part of this chapter is about women in multiple crises. Many women are single parents. They lack self-confidence, self-esteem, and most urgently they lack resources to help themselves. They have financial difficulties. They are alienated and worry about raising their children in an inhuman environment. In the fourth part of this chapter, I will introduce women who choose poverty voluntarily. They are working activists in solidarity with these women and children in Korea.

In Chapter 4, I will describe what poor women dream for the future, and what liberation means for them. They want to live like any other person, with dignity and in full passion of their human rights. And they dream of an alternative family, economic independence, and finding their true selves.

In Chapter 5, I will explore these women’s lives from a biblical perspective. I will also examine this educational work for building a feminist religious education from a biblical perspective, focused on empowering women’s self-identity and self-worth. That analysis will include recovering God’s image,

becoming "Elizabeth," planting mustard seeds, and re-birth as the true self.

Including these biblical meanings, I will suggest principles and a feminist theory of religious education that is capable of empowering women of poverty in Korea and that reflects my internship experience and my interviews of them. This vision of religious education will hopefully bring about a transformation of women, allowing them to put aside self-defeatism that has been caused by the oppressive social structures and inviting them to regain their self-confidence. Furthermore, it will be a stepping stone for the women of different races, classes, and places toward self realization and liberation.

My dissertation will focus on creating a theory of religious education for poor women in Korea. There is no universal theory that can be applied to all people and problems in this world. While my dream will be for complete liberation, freedom, and justice for every woman in the world, I will focus on working with the poor women in Korea theoretically and practically.

This effort is intended to allow women of poverty to grasp and reclaim confidence in themselves as participants in society who have the knowledge and power to transform social realities. When these women dare to act beyond tolerating the pain caused by oppression, they will be able to challenge society and church toward renewal. Perhaps my dissertation cannot speak to every woman in Korea, but it can and will speak to the women of poverty in the church. However, I will continue to hope in my wider vision in which I see it empowering

other women both in the church and outside the church. Liberated women have a power and willingness to encourage other women to work together for the deconstruction and reconstruction of social and ideological systems.

The goal of this work is the creation of an appropriate theory of feminist religious education for poor women in the Korea. In Korea, especially in the church setting, previous research and theory does not give attention to poor women's issues and problems. Their issues become mingled and generalized with common or upper- middle class women's issues without particular consideration given to them. My work will help women of poverty understand who they really are and promote praxis that expands their dreams for women's fuller humanity. Creating this theory will be a pioneering work for the liberation of women in the Korean church.

In this way, I will formulate a feminist theory of religious education for women of poverty in Korea. As a Korean, a woman, a Christian, and a religious educator, my primary partner or context is the women of poverty in the Korean church. Such religious education that I want to create provides Korean women of poverty with hope for changing self, church, and society and enables them to realize their potential by sharing their vision and work.

In next chapter, I will describe three theoretical areas that have influenced my decision to undertake theological study and caused me to feel the

need of religious education as a means of empowering women of poverty in Korea.

CHAPTER 2

Critiques of Theories Related to Feminist Religious Education for Empowering Women of Poverty

My educational passion has been consistently focused on creating a theory of feminist religious education for empowering women of poverty. In pursuing that goal, my own work has been influenced by three areas of study : Korean Minjung theology, Asian feminist theology, and Western feminist religious education.

From Minjung theology, I have learned that theology is not only a theory about God but also about human beings, especially, the poor. It has challenged me to think about the responsibility of the church and Christian believers toward history and society. The liberation of the rich through the liberation of the poor, the salvation of the oppressor through the salvation of the oppressed, and theologizing through Christian social movements have opened my theological eyes.

Asian feminist theology also has challenged me to ask who I am as an individual woman and who women are as a group. It has urged me to question the proper places and roles women in the church, society, and world. And it has insisted on a redefinition of the meaning of salvation for Asian women. Asian feminist theology has deepened and widened my theological perspective. Through the voices of Asian feminist theologians I could hear the pains and struggles of all Asian women beyond my limited experiences in Korea. It also

gives me a confidence that women can build theologies based upon their own experiences and contexts.

The theory of Western feminist religious education has shown me how the theories of Western feminist religious educators embody feminist perspectives.

These three theories have nurtured me as a Korean theologian and Christian educator and are most relevant to my work which intends to empower Korean women of poverty through religious education.

The issues of the poor and of women--both of which are usually marginalized in the Korean Church--must become an integral part of Christian religious education. Feminist religious education is the kind of response to these issues that will enable these women to live their lives with dignity and purpose in the church and society. The problems of the poor and of women are ignored in Korean mainstream churches. Feminist religious education has not been introduced into the Korean church nor its seminaries. There has not even been an effort to raise its theories for discussion. In sharp distinction to this policy of deliberate neglect, Minjung theology has actively pursued a theological examination of the issue of poverty, while Korean and Asian feminist theologians have co-developed a relevant feminist theology to address these two issues which are in fact closely related.

Therefore, as part of the process of creating a feminist theory of religious education for empowering Korean women, will establish a dialogue with these three disciplines--Minjung theology, Asian feminist theology, and Western theory of feminist religious education--bringing into the discussion both their insightful works and their limitations.

A Dialogue with Minjung Theology

Politically, the dictator, President Jung Hee Park set national security and economic growth as social goals and this dictator used them as tools to maintain the status quo that existed under the circumstance of a divided nation. Korean people were required to accede to the national policy without an opportunity to raise any questions. Those who benefited from the established priorities did not allow them to be questioned. The military dictator rationalized his government-policy by connecting the issue of reunification of Korea with that of national safety, thus justifying the oppressive system as a national emergency measure which he enforced at the expense of people who resisted his dictatorship.¹

¹ Daved K. S. Suh, "Han Kook ui Minjung Shin Hak" (Minjun Theology of Korea), in *1980's Han Kook Minjung Shin Hak ui Jeon Kae (A Development of Korean Minjung Theology in 1980's)*, ed. Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So (Seoul: Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 1990), 40-41.

Economically, South Korean society and its people had been forced to participate in rapid growth and industrialization during the 1960s and 1970s. Industries emphasized cooperation without recognizing equality, pushed to improve productivity, forced 90-hour work-weeks on female workers, neglecting the legal 56-hour work-week, and took advantage of the export first policy.²

Therefore many hidden problems caused by the imbalanced and often unjustified growth began gradually to appear. The impoverishment of rural agricultural communities, the increase of farmers who were forced to give up farming, the expansion of the urban poor, the rise of labor problems caused by difficult and painful working conditions, the exposure of the problem of unequal distribution of wealth between the rich and the poor, an excessive accumulation of a foreign loan debt and a lot of economic problems were the cause of an even more unbalanced and unfair treatment of laborers, particularly young and helpless women.³

Under this oppressive situation, Korean laborers, farmers, and students have accelerated their struggle for liberation. Korean theologians, including Minjung theologians, are stimulated into activity by these struggles for justice.

² Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, *Presence of Christ among Minjung: Introduction to the UIM* [Urban Industrial Mission] in Korea (Seoul: CISJD, 1981), 19.

³ Suh, "Han Kook ui Minjung Shin Hak," in Han Kook Minjung *ui Jeon Kae*, ed. Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 40.

Out of this theological reflection, the struggle for justice receives significant affirmation and direction.

Insights from Minjung Theology

The first insight from Minjung theology is that it arises from a concrete context of Korean society. It emphasizes that theology has to serve not only the churches but also people and the world.

Minjung theology has grown out of the specific situation of South Korea of 1970-80. It has arisen from a conviction that theologians must stand before God as honestly participating in the sufferings of people (Minjung) who have been oppressed, exploited, and alienated.⁴

The second insight from Minjung theology is that it discovers people and their events in the Bible. Minjung movements unfolded before Minjung theologians began their theological works. They saw people's power and anger that provided the energy for social movements. People realized they were not just common people any more but possessed a human agency that could bring about a historical transformation of Korean society. Theologians bore witness to these peoples' events and named them "Minjung."

⁴ Won Don Kang, "Shinhakjuk Haesukhakyi Saeroun Mosack" (A New Searching for Theological Hermeneutics), in *1980s' Han Kook Minjung Shin Hak ui Jeon Kae*, ed. Han Kook Sihh Hak Yeon Koo So, 258.

Looking at the Bible with new eyes that had been opened by people's movements, Korean theologians realized that the Biblical text is not written by God's a one-sided order but was formed in the midst of Minjung events. Their ideas differ from the Western understanding of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as a person or a Word. Rather, Minjung theologians understand Jesus as an event, especially, Minjung theology has a great concern about the conditions of the poor and has made its concern the center of its theology.⁵ Through the realization of Minjung and Minjung events, Korean theologians have begun to move their theological focus from the individual Jesus to the unnamed Minjung who, until now, have existed only as background to Jesus.⁶

Korean Minjung theology has accomplished a revolutionary transformation of the way to theologize by having a hermeneutical perspective from Minjung eyes to see and interpret the world, history, and the Bible.⁷ They regard Minjung as living subjects who bring about Jesus' events. It means that

⁵ Byung Moo Ahn, "Minjung Woon Dong kwa Minjung Shin Hak" (Minjung Movement and Minjung Theolgy)," in *1980' Han Kook Minjung Shin Hak ui Jeon Kae*, ed. Han Kook Sihn Hak Yeon Koo So, 25-31.

⁶ Chang Lark Kim, Young Jin Min, and Byung Moo Ahn, "Minjung Shin Hak ui Sung Sue Hae Suk Bang Bub," (A Method of the Biblical Interpretation of Minjung Theology), in *1980's Han Kook Minjung Shin Hak ui Jeon Kae*, ed. Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 306.

⁷ Won Don Kang, in *1980's Han Kook Minjung*, ed. Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 258.

Minjung play a role in making Jesus as Jesus should be.⁸ This is the reason why Minjung theology is called "a theology of event." It is a work of theological interpretation of people and events related to a specific situation in which justice, peace, equality, and human rights are oppressed by a dictatorship.

This theology of event searches for the working of God in the historical events and it applies the tasks of interpretation.⁹ One representative Minjung theologians, Byung Moo Ahn, thinks the Jesus' event is repeated and reproduced in the rise of Minjung and the tasks of Minjung theology are its participation in the events of Minjung and its testimony concerning the 'nowness' of Jesus' events.¹⁰ He also explains that Minjung theology plays the role of witness to the experiences of events in which Minjung participate not as objects but subjects.¹¹

With Minjung, theologians, activists, and Korean Christians spoke out on labor issues, protested against the dictatorial system. It is Minjung theology that connects the experiences of the people in today's Jesus events with the

⁸ Chang Lark Kim, Young Jin Min, and Byung Moo Ahn, in *1980's Han Kook Minjung*, ed. Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 307.

⁹ Won Don Kang, "Minjung Hyun Sil ui Bahl Kyun kwa Uri Gudsae Dae Han Choo Goo" (The Finding of Minjung's Reality and the Searching for Ours), in *1980' Han Kook Minjung*, ed. Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 86.

¹⁰ Ibid., 87.

¹¹ Byung Moo Ahn, "Minjung Woon Dong kwa Minjung Shin Hak" (Minjung Movement and Minjung Theolgy)," in *1980' Han Kook Minjung*, ed. Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 26.

experiences of Christians throughout the history of Christianity. Participating in Minjung movements, Minjung theologians try to testify to Christ's real presence in the events of Minjung.¹²

The third insight from Minjung theology is that it claims faith's social responsibility and praxis. Praxis is a term coming from Paulo Freire and it means the circulation of action and reflection.¹³ A pioneer Minjung theologian, Byung Moo Ahn believes that salvation is realized when people acknowledge "my poverty" as "our poverty" as it is shown in Jesus.¹⁴ He says, "If I transfer 'my' sadness of poverty into 'ours' then it leads automatically to a movement of salvation and liberation."¹⁵ It is a way to realize their (Minjung) subjectivity as well.

One of the more radical Minjung theologians, Young Bock Kim explains how Minjung realizes their subjectivity:

Subjectivity is being realized through their struggles against oppressive powers and repressive social structures. In so doing, the Minjung have risen up to be subjects of their own destiny, refusing to be condemned to the fate of being objects of manipulation and

¹² Byung Moo Ahn, *Minjung Shin Hak Yi Ya Ki (The Stories of Minjung)* (Seoul: Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So , 1988),109-10.

¹³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1989), 75.

¹⁴ Byung Moo Ahn, *Minjung Shin Hak Yi Ya Ki (The Stories of Minjung)*, 121.

¹⁵ Ibid., 126.

suppression.¹⁶

From being individuated, powerless and ignored Minjung can be changed into subjects engaged in the process of communal struggles. Minjung theology is intended to be praxis-centered. Churches which are built by Minjung and their pastors tend to have a passion for the reformation of society and the church. These communities provide an important context for development of a dynamic Minjung theology.

As a theology which is responsive to its context, to the Minjung, and faithful to its goal of social transformation, Minjung theology challenges me to examine its faith statements for the place of women. Its theologians try to explain who are Minjung in Korean society through its liberative theology. However, at the conclusion of my search I find that it does not fully address the reality of women. My challenge to Minjung theology is that creating a theory of feminist religious education for empowering women of poverty would be an appropriate theological work.

Minjung Theologians' Definitions of Minjung

The Minjung is not a self-defined concept because of the dynamics of the Minjung and history. It will be changed according to the historical situation

¹⁶ Yong Bock Kim, "Messiah and Minjung: Discerning Messianic Politics over against Political Messianism," in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Yong Bock Kim (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), 187-88.

because it is born in a particular time and situation of South Korea. This is the reason why Minjung theologians do not define a notion of Minjung. Young Bock Kim says:

Minjung is not a concept or object which can be easily explained or defined. Minjung signifies a living reality which is dynamic, changing and complex. This living reality defines its own existence, and generates new acts and drama in history; and it refuses in principle to be defined conceptually.¹⁷

In addition, Byung Moo Ahn explains as follows:

I do not define the concept of Minjung. If I explain it, it will be a certain concept. Once a concept is formed it is separated from its essence.... I see the Minjung as just they are. One thing that I pay attention to them is that they have an ability of self-transcendence.... As a mass, Minjung can do self-transcendence. The events happened by the self-transcendental Minjung are the events of Jesus.¹⁸

Understanding Jesus as an event, he prefers to focus on the description of events of Minjung rather than the concept of Minjung. With this idea, Ahn introduces two kinds of understandings of Minjung. One is that the Minjung are those oppressed by the power of the intelligentsia, are economically poor, and politically powerless. The other is that the Minjung are the object of daily exploitation.¹⁹ To provide an understanding of Minjung, he focuses on the experiences of oppression of people.

¹⁷ Young Bock Kim, "Messiah and Minjung," in *Minjung Theology*, ed. Kim, 186.

¹⁸ Byung Moo Ahn, 27.

¹⁹ Byung Moo Ahn, 285.

A Korean theologian, Kee Deuk Song writes his understanding on

Minjung related with Jesus' followers:

There were people who could not even work among Jesus' followers. They were lepers, psychopaths, the blind, the crippled, and wanderers. They were marginalized from the workers. They were outcasts. I think the core of the notion of Minjung is a word of 'being abandoned.'²⁰

He insists that estrangement or alienation is necessary to the definition of Minjung. The definition of Minjung, he points out, must correspond to the concrete reality of people and one cannot describe them outside their realities. By excluding the element of alienation, Minjung theology would be in danger of denying the Minjung reality.²¹

Young Hack Hyun understands Minjung as living entities in their specific contexts such as poor farmers in rural areas, migrant people who abandon their farmlands in order to survive, rag pickers, day laborers, garbage collectors, prostitutes, young laborers, women laborers in small factories, political offenders, and so on. The reason Young Hack Hyun pays attention to these people is that they are considered the least important by society; social injustices have the most severe impact on their lives and they are defenseless against them. A

²⁰ Kee Duk Song, "Minjung Shin Hak ui Jung Chae" (The Identity of Minjung Theology), in 1980' *Han Kook Minjung*, ed. Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 73.

²¹ Ibid., 70.

society that focuses on providing the wealthy and powerful with every social benefit while ignoring the needs of those who are powerless is guilty of what he calls "social absurdities."

In spite of this general reluctance of Minjung theologians' to give a firm definition of Minjung, a common understanding can be identified. In general, Minjung is understood as people who are oppressed politically, exploited economically, alienated culturally, marginalized religiously, and de-subjectified ideologically.²² Other definitions of "Minjung" vary and are even ambiguous, Andrew Sung Park summarizes it in the following way:

1) the Minjung are the majority who are oppressed and exploited by the minority; 2) the Minjung as an historical reality will play a major role of history and the central theme for God's salvific work; 3) the Minjung are politically oppressed, socially marginalized, economically exploited, culturally despised, and religiously condemned.²³

As I have mentioned above, Minjung theology was born in the midst of the harsh social reality of Minjung. Therefore, rather than making a statement about who Minjung are, it draws a socio-historical picture in which Minjung participate and illustrates the oppressive structure of the society in which they live.

²² Ibid, 70.

²³ Andrew Sung Park, *Minjung and Pungryu Theologies in Contemporary Korea: A Critical and Comparative Examination*, Ph. D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif., 1985 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1997), 24.

Although Minjung theology has placed an emphasis on the liberation of the poor, adequate attention has not been given to women, even though the reality is that poor women are most in need of liberation. Intending to establish the need for a strong gender consciousness in Minjung theology, this study focuses on the special needs of poor women and challenges Minjung theology to create a space for addressing the particularly heavy burden that is forced upon poor women.

A Critique of Minjung Theology from the Gender Perspective

The point of critiquing Minjung theology from the gender perspective is neither to render it hostile nor useless. Rather, it is to develop its gender perspective which has been lost and to affirm a need of feminist education for women of poverty highlighting their plight that has not been given the attention it deserves.

Minjung theology is a political hermeneutic of the Gospel and a political interpretation of Korean Christian experiences.²⁴ The term “political” here means taking the side of the poor and the oppressed. Therefore, Minjung theology carries many stories of political struggles, social events and justice movements

²⁴ David K. S. Suh, “Minjung and Theology in Korea: A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation,” in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Young Bock Kim, 19.

in which Minjung are involved. It was the death of Tae Il Chun²⁵ in 1970 that ignited a peoples movement and gave the birth to Minjung theology. In the years since this event, various social issues have been raised. NCC (National Council of Churches) organized the Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) and the Committee of Human Rights. Many groups, including pastors, students, and laborers, accelerated their struggle to gain political rights for the oppressed.

However, stories of women of poverty have seldom been noticed. Whereas Chun's death has raised a dynamic social movements for the liberation of laborers and human rights, no one paid attention to the suffering of countless young females. Other areas needed to be targeted such as the peasant problem, and environmental issues, while gender discrimination was marginalized as a secondary issue even by the movement for social justice.

Minjung theology has not considered oppressed women as a part of Minjung. In this point, I would like to criticize Minjung theology by looking through the lens of a gender perspective.

Going back to Chun's story, the majority of the laborers in the Peace Market in which he had worked were young women whose ages ranged from 15 to 20. They worked more than 15 hours a day under miserable working

²⁵ On November 13, 1970, Tae Il Chun immolated himself, crying out, 'Do not exploit the young lives! Do not make my death futile!' for protesting against the inhuman condition of the laborers of a sewing factory at the Peace Market in Seoul, Korea.

conditions.²⁶ These women were the Minjung of Minjung. This was not the only of exploitation of young women laborers in the urban industrial fields. There are many young women laborers' stories in the labor movement.

Presence of Christ among Minjung: Introduction to the UIM in Korea, published by the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, introduces many narratives from the laborers' movement in the 1970s and 1980s in Korea. The survey of this book covered 350 laborers and the composition by gender showed that males comprised 28% and females 72% of laborers interviewed.²⁷ In fact, many companies had many more female than male laborers.

In Taihyup Ltd., employees numbered 1,500 at the end of 1978, most of whom were young women, from 18 to 22 years of age.²⁸ Bando Sangsa Co., Ltd. in 1974, employed 1,400 laborers of which 1,200 were female.²⁹

The case of Y.H. Trading Company shows how young women laborers struggled for their rights as workers:

In Y.H. case workers were receiving 220 won per day (about 40cents U.S.), and were exposed to continuous threats of dismissal, wage cuts, unfair changes in duties, and other

²⁶ Byung Moo Ahn, *Minjung Shin Hak Yiyaki*(*The Stories of Minjung*), 257.

²⁷ Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, (CISJD), 326.

²⁸ CISJD, 279.

²⁹ CISJD, 291.

abuses. ...The demands they made were guarantees of the workers rights to live and to work, withdrawal of the notice of factory closure, and underwriting of company finances by the bank, in addition to other requests. The management of the bank and the office of Labor affairs refused to negotiate the workers demands. Instead, about 220 policemen, including 100 armed men, came to the scene to the sit-in. At least 233 women were involved in the demonstration.³⁰

It did not end here.

On August 9th over 200 women workers went to the New Democratic Party building to appeal to the government party to work out a fair solution. On August 11, during a forced dispersal of the workers by a 1,000 strong police force, Miss Kim Kyung-Sook (21 years old) was killed. The police sent the rest of the trade union members to their homes in the country.³¹

Miss Kim had been a factory worker since she was 14 years old. Supporting her poor family, she had to leave behind her mother and younger brother and in her eight years in the factory, she had had innumerable nosebleeds from exhaustion, and she sometimes worked three months without being paid. She had to live on, struggling with near-starvation, inadequate clothing, and no heat in winter.³² In spite of her pains, efforts, and all she endured to gain workers' rights, her life was lost and the effort failed.

³⁰ CISJD, 260-61.

³¹ Nam Dong Suh, "Towards a Theology of Han," in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Kim, 52.

³² Ibid., 52.

In the event of Tongil Textile Company, one of the biggest textile companies in Korea, we can see how women workers suffered under the hardships caused by gender discrimination. In this factory, most of the workers were women but the union leaders were men. It was obvious to the women workers at Tongil that they needed to select women union leaders in order to gain improvements in their rights. As a result of their united group effort, 29 seats out of 41 were occupied by women workers. In addition, a sexually discriminatory wage increase in 1971 further strengthened the women's solidarity. Ms. Kil Cha Chu was the first woman to be elected the head of a branch union in Korea.³³ It was a big step for the development of the women's labor movement of Korea. Learning from her experience, other women continued to move into leadership roles.

However, it was too difficult to keep their movements depending their own power only.

In 1976, Mr. Ko unilaterally called a meeting of representatives in which he was elected head of the Tongil Union Branch, ignoring the advice of the Acting Chief, Ms. Lee Yeong Suk. The women workers protested against this election. The police ordered the workers to disperse, but they continued to say that they would not disperse until the election of Mr. Ko who held no union membership, was declared invalid. The police forcibly took away about 100 naked women workers by police bus. A woman worker said, "Can you imagine how indignant and helpless we felt to have to use our naked bodies as shields against the armed police? We

³³ CISJD, 274-75.

cannot think of the management of staff without disgust, as they looked at us, giggling and smirking as we were taken away, or lay unconscious.” She spoke gritting her teeth.³⁴

Police suppressed women’s labor movements by taking advantage of women’s physical weakness. Male laborers who had been bribed by employers destroyed the office of the trade union.³⁵

Many women workers were fighting for equal rights but sooner or later, their movements were devastated and even their issues were replaced or rendered invisible by the male-centered labor movement that refused to reflect women’s particular situation and issues.

Furthermore, Minjung theology did not pay any attention to women workers who had to leave their hometown, work in factories at low wages, and who were ruined by violence at very young age. Despite the struggles and experiences of these Minjung women, the history of the Korean labor movement did not carry. Minjung theologians did not realize that these women were the important participants in the event of the Jesus liberation movement. They did not know how to analyze and theologize women’s struggles. When they speak on women’s miserable stories, they just use them as examples to explain a theological term or idea called “Han.”

As a Korean word, Han has multiple meanings. Park explains about Han:

³⁴ CISJD. 274-75

³⁵ CISJD. 277.

Han can be further defined as the collapsed pain of the heart due to psychosomatic, interpersonal, social, political, economic, and cultural oppression and repression. The reality of Han is the emotional, rational, and physical suffering of pain rooted in the anguish of a victim.³⁶

Han has various roots but its image and meaning are limited to the psychological aspects. Therefore, the meanings of women's pain, oppression, and struggle are minimized when they are discussed in the category of Han.

Ahn mentions women and Han:

There are a lot of stories of Han.... Most of stories related with ghosts are about women. Many women died in chagrin. ... Therefore, Han and shaman of shamanism have a close relationship. Jesus was a priest of Han and pastors have to be priests of Han.³⁷

Without mentioning the social cause of women's death, his interests are on the role of priest for healing of Han. The healing of Han is important; however, it cannot be completed without socio-cultural transformation.

Another theologian, David Kwang Sun Suh writes about women's Han.

Suh observes that under Confucianism's strict imposition of discrimination against women, the existence of women was Han itself.³⁸ He writes:

³⁶ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 16-17.

³⁷ Byung Moo Ahn, 291.

³⁸ Nam Dong Suh, "Minjung and Theology in Korea," in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Kim, 28.

It is the kind of feeling a woman has when she cannot produce a male child for the family and thus has to agree, against her will, to her husband bringing in another woman for childbearing, or when she has to obey her mother-in-law even though the order is absolutely unreasonable. It is an awareness of the structural injustice which a Confucian society imposes on women. Han is a psycho-social term which appears inevitable in the biography of Korean women and in their stories, novels, poems and plays.³⁹

He also mentions women's situation under the rubric of Confucian society but he uses women's situation which is related with Han for a better understanding. He expands Han's socio-political level but his main concern is focused on the explanation of what Han is. However, in his writings he neglects to make his theological criticism of the structural injustice which a Confucian society imposes on women. Watching as patriarchal culture and society destroyed women's lives, Minjung theologians concerned themselves with the description of the unjust practices rather than criticizing the male-centered socio-cultural structure or suggesting alternative ways to see Minjung women. Minjung theology must add a feminist perspective to its theologizing. When Minjung theology does not deal with women's stories--which contains all problems in society as individual, private, and psychological matters-- when it fails to treat Minjung women and men on an equal basis, it fails to articulate a true meaning of Minjung within Minjung theology.

³⁹ Ibid., 28.

Today, Korean society has been changed by the efforts of those who have struggled for democracy. Minjung theology and the Minjung church movement have participated in this process of democratic development. Based on this experience, if we will realize the status of women of poverty and analyze candidly their realities and struggles, Minjung theology will be enriched.

In spite of being challenged by Minjung theology I appreciate that I have been able to criticize it with my feminist perspective learned from many Western feminists. Especially, Western feminist religious educators have given me another tool to analyze my society and church. As a Minjung theologian and a feminist Christian educator, I will describe their excellences and weaknesses below.

A Dialogue with Western Feminist Religious Education Theory

The women's liberation movement of the 1960s brought many changes in various areas. Women began to support each other and to see their lives with women's eyes. Feminist religious education also emerged at that same time. The women's movement provided the fuel for uncovering the male bias in many aspects of contemporary life⁴⁰, including theology and religious education.

⁴⁰ Patricia Maguire, *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1987), 77.

Feminist theology was introduced into South Korea in the 1980s but even today feminist religious education is virtually unknown in Korea. As I build this theory of feminist religious education for Korean women, I have gained much insight from Western feminist religious educators' ideas. They have recognized women's absence and challenged the previous ideas of religious education.

Insights from Western Feminist Religious Education

Mary Elizabeth Moore, Carol Lakey Hess, Maria Harris, and many other feminist religious educators have inspired me to have a passion to reform the patriarchal culture through the educational process. They have contributed to the exploration of sexism and its influences on the church and society. I will describe their theoretical insights that I have learned before I criticize their limitations.

Mary Elizabeth Moore and feminist education. Mary Elizabeth Moore has a great concern for a feminist-formed education ministry, which would not simply focus on disseminating information, but would utilize methods of critique, reconstruction, and remythologizing.⁴¹ Communicating with various theologies, she is equipping feminist perspective and theology on her theological and educational works. For her, feminist theology is an attempt to critique and

⁴¹ Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, "Feminist Theology and Education," in *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*, ed. Jack Seymour and Donald Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 76.

reconstruct all of theology, to take into account women and the value of their experience.⁴²

According to Mary Elizabeth Moore, the feminism including feminist theology challenges women to have new vision for leadership in the Christian community.⁴³ She believes that through this vision, people in understand themselves to be equal partners rather than members of a hierarchy.

Based upon this idea, she identifies three challenges for educational ministry :

The first one is to see the teaching ministry as a partner to all other forms of ministry in the church....The second challenge is to seek inclusive participation in church leadership --to seek, value, and encourage the participation of women and men, of all ages, with varying gifts and abilities. The third challenge is to make room for people with different leadership styles.⁴⁴

Responding to this challenge, she believes that teaching is an important way to help people identify their gifts and discern their vocations, to equip them for full participation in ministry.⁴⁵

From her teaching, I have realized two things. One is the importance of the relationship between theology and religious education. Educational practice

42 Ibid., 65.

43 Ibid., 79.

44 Ibid., 79-80.

45 Ibid., 80.

can make theology to be concrete and it has potential to connect people more deeply with God, human community, and the natural world.⁴⁶ The other is that feminist religious education sees the entire community as a teaching and learning community in which both women and men can participate fully. It makes education a work of justice to resist the trend to dichotomize mind and body, thinking and feeling, practical politics and mysticism, nature and divine reality. These dichotomies do not simply distort ways of thinking, but serve to place men and women in separate categories and to value one over the other.⁴⁷

Carol Lakey Hess and women's sense of self. The second feminist religious educator, Carol Lakey Hess, insists the development of woman's own self which is not formed by tradition or other authorities. In her book, *Caretakers of Our Common House*, she argues for an educational process in communities of faith that nurtures a woman toward being caretakers of her own house (her self) and of the common house (the community of faith).⁴⁸ Hess criticizes the dualistic development between man and woman in the community of faith and

⁴⁶ Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), xvii.

⁴⁷ Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Women and Men in the Social Order: Challenge to Religious Education," in *Religious Education as Social Transformation*, ed. Allen J. Moore (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1989), 80.

⁴⁸ Carol Lakey Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 19.

judges this unjust development of self to be a sin. She emphasizes that self-possession is precisely what women need, not the prison from which they should escape.

Utilizing various resources of theology, storybook, novel, psychological theory, and biblical story, she shows clearly how these previous traditions have affected to form girls and women's selves. Seeking and constructing truth for women she develops conversational education which means "hard dialogue and deep connections" in a community of diverse participants with a rich tradition and the Bible in a critical awareness.⁴⁹ Through her work, Hess teaches the community of faith that religious education must nurture women to choose an authentic personal identity as women in a reconstructive way.

Her idea leads me to think about Korean women in the church in which women have existed under the shadow of men in a male-centered system and their particularities have been ignored. They have never been taught who they are and what value they have in both the church and society so that the development of women's self is very important for the liberation of Korean women. From Hess's perspectives, I found a possibility for renewing Korean church community through women's renewed self.

Maria Harris and women's spirituality. The third figure among feminist religious educators who has given me important insights is Maria Harris.

49 Ibid., 182-94.

Especially significant, she links women and spirituality through woman's gender identity. She argues that as women realize their own senses of gender it deepens their spirituality. Woman's gender identity shapes woman's spirituality.⁵⁰ Women enlarge their spirituality as they experience women's particularities through ritual, body, and nature.

Her ideas on the development of women's spirituality have been shaped by her Roman Catholicism. Maria Harris incorporates imaginative sacramental practices and rituals into religious education for women, creating, in the process, a program of religious education that is responsive to women of all ages--from girls to jubilant women.⁵¹

Harris's works focus on the important life experiences of women. For example, in her book *Women and Teaching*, she describes five essential themes for feminist pedagogy: silence, remembering, ritual mourning, artistry, and birthing. In another, *Dance of the Spirit*, she presents a series of stages for women's spiritual development. These two insightful books, plus her others: *The Jubilee Time*, *Teaching and Religious Imagination*, and *Fashion Me a People*, are

⁵⁰ Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran, *Reshaping Religious Education: Conversations on Contemporary Practice* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 77.

⁵¹ Harris and Moran, 74.

breaking ground in creating religious education that acknowledges and promotes the spiritual development of girls and women.⁵²

Harris has made me realize that for too long Korean women have been required to use another gender's language and traditions that define and shape church and society. This has deprived Korean women of their own spiritual development. Thus, they have always been misrepresented in the church. Feminist religious education, by giving particular attention to the development of women's spirituality, can bring about the liberation of Korean women in the contexts in which they exist.

Applying feminist religious education to Korean women. These feminist educators have challenged me to reflect on the situation that exists in the Korean church in which theology and church are not integrated but separated. An awareness of discrimination based upon gender difference has not fully developed. Women leaders and leadership necessary to bring about change are lacking. These women maintain that the discovery of a woman's self is as important as honoring her status in the church for the development of faith community. They have shown clearly through their writing and their work that women's self, spirituality, and liberation are related and to overcome the

⁵² Judith A. Dorney, "Maria Harris: An Aesthetic and Erotic Justice," in *Faith of Our Foremothers: Women Changing Religious Education*, ed. Barbara Anne Keely (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 184-86.

oppression found in the sexist society and church this connection must be acknowledged.

Feminist religious education theorists in Western society have explored sexism and its influences in the church and society. They have analyzed how women have lost their self-identity in their own communities that they are criticized and treated in a discriminatory way. To change this, feminists have proposed an alternative education that will bring about their liberation. However, when feminist theorists speak of women's issues, they seem to focus only on gender consciousness and fail to address class-consciousness. When applying a feminist theory of religious education to Korean women of poverty, certain difficulties arise. I identify the difficulties as problems of generalization (the lack of class-consciousness) and abstraction (the lack of praxis.)

A Critique of Western Feminist Religious Education

A Generalization: The Lack of Class-Consciousness. Almost all women in the world have been hurt by sexism. Therefore, the feminist response to oppression should address the situation of all women everywhere. However, it does not. While Western feminism has provided the fuel for uncovering gender-consciousness in many aspects it has not developed a tool for raising class-consciousness among women. Feminists correctly identify the sexist notion of woman as a general category which has been formulated by men. They

correctly understand woman as a historical reality with many dimensions who exists as a vital part of her social context. However, in their writings, they have not been concerned about the particularities of women in poverty or those who live in Third World economies. Therefore, the issues and problems of poor women are generalized from the perspectives of upper-and-middle class white Western women.

One representative authors of the Western feminist theory of religious education, Maria Harris, says in her book, *Women and Teaching*, “the particular work I want to insist on as still needing to be done is the creating of a pedagogy appropriate to the lives of women.”⁵³ In this statement, she does not explain who these women are, noting only the obvious gender distinction that “women” are differentiated from “men.” Her teaching theory for women is designed to be accomplished as a spiritual progression.

The best way to create a spirituality of teaching which liberates women is to posit and describe a series of steps, leading to and emerging from one another in a natural rhythm.⁵⁴

Expressing a spirituality of teaching based upon a series of steps, she believes that this teaching will bring about liberation for women. While her optimism is

⁵³ Maria Harris, *Women and Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 6.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 14.

admirable, in the opinion of this writer it fails to take into consideration the harsh realities that burden women who live in poverty. Relativity among women's liberation is apparently possible but not all women experience the same pains. The roots of pains are different and it means that the ways to heal them are also different.

Her suggestions on women's education are very helpful for the development of individual woman's self-awareness and spirituality, if all women have the same experiences and backgrounds. If they live under the same conditions, and if all of them have the same socio-political perspectives, her steps offer a great place to practice women's spirituality. However, although her idea is generalized in the name of all women, in fact it has relevance only for the upper-and-middle class women. Her words show her status as follows:

Women operate from this Dwelling Place in many different ways. There are women in health care who have given themselves to nursing the sick and the dying; religious groups of women whose purpose for coming together in community was and is to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, visit the imprisoned, and assist those who are abused and battered.⁵⁵

She makes an unconscious differentiation between religious groups of women and the hungry. To her, the hungry, thirsty, homeless, imprisoned, the abused, and the battered are not subjects for the education of women liberation but

⁵⁷ Maria Harris, *Dance of the Spirit: The Seven Steps of Women's Spirituality* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 98.

objects who are the passive receivers of care and services from religious groups of women. She does not mention the poor in her theory. The women of poverty do not belong to her category of “women.”

In addition, Maria Harris mentions other women's way of being in the world as seekers, questers and resisters who recognize the evil existing in social structures and political systems⁵⁶ but she does not identify them with her notion of “women.” These women as a part of her feminist spirituality are expressed as “they”⁵⁷ which is separated from a notion of “we.” Women of the third world who struggle against sexism, racism, and classism are reduced to being “the other” and “an ideological partner” in her ideas.

Another feminist scholar of religious education, Carol Lakey Hess has great concern for women's development in communities of faith. She notices women's marginalized situations in church history and says:

For much of church history, however, women have been marginalized or excluded from the conversation. Though their voices could not be fully contained and though they have made remarkable contributions despite attempts to silence their voices, they have not been full partners.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Harris, *Dance of the Spirit*, 70-71.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 71.

⁵⁸ Carol Lakey Hess, “Education as an Art of Getting Dirty,” in *The Arts of Ministry: Feminist-Womanist Approaches*, ed. Chrisie Cozad Neuger (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 66.

According to Hess, women were not only excluded as active participants in religious and social discourse, but were specifically rewarded for being submissive, dependent, obedient, and sacrificial in the name of being female.⁵⁹ In order to heal this situation within the community of faith, she proposes “conversational education/caring” which is characterized by “hard dialogue and deep connections.”⁶⁰ She includes sharing stories, naming pain, and celebrating achievements in conversational caring. By sharing their stories, women acknowledge and affirm differentness; in naming pain, women foster honesty; in celebrating achievement, women nurture assertiveness.⁶¹

The questions I direct to her are: What does “woman” mean for Hess and who fits into this category socio-politically and environmentally? Can women’s character of relationality or caring overcome every issue of differentness among women? Is relationality or caring a characteristic of all women? Without including a perspective of classism, her feminist ideas cannot be utilized for a healing community of faith. However, it is not simple to fit poor women and women of the Third World into the experiences of women in Western society.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁶¹ Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women’s Development in Communities of Faith*, 104.

Hess's notion of women focused primarily on gender consciousness.

She describes the role for a feminist approach to Christian education.

A feminist approach to Christian education proclaims and works to bring about the good news that girls and women, as well as boys and men, shall inherit the church along with the earth. For this to happen, communities of faith need to give girls and women a voice and need to learn from the particular gifts and experiences of girls and women. This is not simply for the well-being of girls and women, it is for the full humanity of all in communities of faith.⁶²

It is important to insist the roles of communities of faith and a feminist approach to Christian education in order to encourage women to have their voices and show their particular gifts and experiences but women's particular gifts and experiences have to be described according to their contexts and social status. As long as theorists fail to establish a concrete context for the social status of women, the well-being of women and the full humanity of all will be obscure statements.

Western feminist theorists tend to simplify or generalize women's issues without understanding the differing contexts in which women live, in particular without addressing the issue of class. In order to achieve the genuine liberation of women in poverty and women in the Third World, feminists need to give serious thought to the political, social, and economic aspects that influence women's realities.

⁶² Hess, "Education As An Art of Getting Dirty," in *Arts of Ministry*, ed. Neuger, 62.

An Abstraction: The Lack of Praxis and Communalty. One of the limitations of the Western white feminist theory of religious education is its theoretical abstraction due to a lack of praxis and communalty.

Western feminist theory of religious education rightly claims that women experience various forms of discrimination and oppression in everyday life. It suggests many ways to support women's dreams of emancipation. It provides women with the knowledge necessary to see themselves and to critique their realities. However, these realities must be examined carefully from the perspective of a praxis that is based upon a dialectical relationship between action and reflection before they can be characterized as 'liberating theories.'

In addition, a feminist theory of religious education must be concerned with transformation that is not focused solely on transformation at the individual level, but serves as an effective stimulus toward mutual solidarity among all women. The Western feminist theory of religious education, consciously or unconsciously, misses these two elements essential to effective transformation, that is, praxis and communalty. Therefore, the words and notions of theory are abstract, vague, and even romantic. This tendency has shown itself in the writings of authors of feminist religious education as demonstrated below.

Maria Harris considers teaching as a religious act, a sacramental act, a holy act; a form of spirituality. She identifies five themes in women's lives: stillness, artistry, childbirth, memory, and mourning. When women experience

these five, hold them with intelligence and attention, examine them carefully, and allow themselves to dis-cover their relation to the activity of teaching, these experiences allow women to attain a level of spirituality which bestows a gift not only on women, but also on men, children, even all of creation. Nevertheless, while this teaching has a possibility of developing an understanding of women and their ways of being in the world,⁶³ it does not go far enough to help the women of poverty to confront their suffering which results from the gender imbalance of power between men and women and the social inequality between the haves and the have-nots.

Teaching at its best, according to Harris, is the work of learning the routes of walking into and touching the converted center of harmony and wholeness.⁶⁴ To use Harris's apt words, without naming subjects and contexts of walking and touching, "harmony" and "wholeness" will be reduced to romantic words which are separated from praxis. To say that "everyone and everything is related to everything and everyone else; that we are sisters and brothers to one another, despite differing races, religions, and nationalities"⁶⁵ is to say nothing about those women of poverty who are daily engaged in the painful process of liberation and struggle against economic crisis and gender discrimination.

⁶³ Harris, *Women and Teaching*, 12-13.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁵ Harris, *Dance of the Spirit*, 41.

My criticism applies as well to her idea of three aspects of community which she maintains are blended into women's spirituality. For her, the first aspect of community includes the women themselves. The second is community with other women, especially women of spiritual insight, women of the past, and female ancestors of each woman's personal bloodlines. The third essential aspect of community is women's sisterhood with earth. For women's spirituality to flourish she brings all women together in the name of community. She calls it "a common sisterhood." How is it possible to be called a common sisterhood without a concrete solidarity among all women? Harris' concept of community is not a mutual unity deeply engaging each other in the practical activity of dealing with problems, but a simplistic mixture of fragmentary parts that each individual woman represents. The abstraction due to the lack of praxis is shown in the following quote:

The awesome danger in which our planet exists comes from weapons and from environmental pollution, of course. But this in turn comes from our unthinking collusion with attitudes and systems that poison Earth daily and hourly, rather than reverencing her as mother and as sister. Attitudes such as domination and acquisitiveness; systems such as unthinking militarism and unnecessary consumption.⁶⁶

Here, what faces the danger from weapons and environmental pollution is represented as "our planet," not specific countries or peoples. The cause of the

⁶⁶ Ibid., 43.

danger is identified as unthinking militarism and dominant attitudes, but in reality, a few power-possessed countries build strong military armies and a capitalistic system that pose danger!

Even though she characterizes resistance as a form of spirituality, she does not go beyond the recognition of “the awful truth.” She writes:

Resisters are those who face the awful truth that injustice and evil come from within us, not from monsters who are not human not from the animal kingdom, but from us, the human animals. But resisters also recognize the evil existing in social structures and political systems... They recognize evil in apartheid or the neglect of the elderly or the rape of the land.⁶⁷

From this perspective, the author cannot distinguish between the subject and object for overcoming the danger and the awful truth. Who are “we?” Who are “they?” What is “evil?” How does evil relate with political systems and the social structures? How does “recognition” lead people to an action for justice? The ambiguity is not helpful in terms of suggesting any clear directions for action or praxis for the people who want to be liberated. This is the danger of abstraction.

In addition, Maria Harris values women’s power of connectedness and believes it is the valid basis for the formation of community. However, she does not see that women in other parts of the world and in different classes and cultures may need different ways of building community which supports those women in their praxis of liberation.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 71.

This is the revelation, born out of the power of connectedness, that we are part of everyone and everything that exists. Our call is to Community. True, our experience as we begin Discovering is of a solitary spiraling down into a deep well. But when we touch bottom, the experience turns out to be that the waters of life and spirit underneath each of our own wells are common waters where all that has divided us begins to merge. In the merging, we dis-cover the impulse toward community.⁶⁸

Her literary expression is beautiful but it is too romantic to empower the women in different situations to succeed in their hard struggle to be liberated.

An African American scholar of religious education, N. Lynne Westfield, also criticizes Maria Harris on this point as follows:

As a White woman scholar she has many similarities to what I heard Black women saying, but many differences were also apparent. ...Harris defines the seven steps toward spiritual awakening and healing as being Awakening, Dis-covering, Creating, Dwelling, Nourishing, Traditioning, and Transforming. She suggests that a person must complete step one before going to step two and step two before going to three, and so on. This is like clogging--everyone doing the same thing at the same time.⁶⁹

In her book, *A Womanist Practice of Hospitality*, she defines herself as a learner, teacher, and researcher and from her own Black woman's imagination, she believes that resilient, Christian, African American women participate routinely in

⁶⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁹ N. Lynne Westfield, *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001), 29-30.

practices that heal and renew, individually and communally.⁷⁰ Furthermore, she confirms that womanist religious education, a burgeoning discipline by Black female scholars of religion, addresses the pedagogical, epistemological, spiritual, and sociopolitical implications of the “tridimensional phenomenon of race, class, and gender oppression in the experience of African-American women.”⁷¹ A clear understanding of the location in which each woman exists leads to a concrete practice for liberation.

Not all scholars of white feminist religious education have the same view or abstraction of the praxis. For example, Mary Elizabeth Moore not only criticizes sexism in the Christian church but also reminds us of women’s issues of poverty and violence. She demonstrates an understanding that is different from other white feminists in that she does not locate women’s issues only in sexism, but sees other women struggling under multiple oppressions and tries to make them visible.

The severity of the oppressions puts into larger perspective the problems that were first vocalized in public by white, middle-class, North American and European feminists. In fact, the multiple oppressions remind those same white, middle-class feminists that they are themselves a part of an oppressor class and that women are among the victims of their own participation in racism, classism, and militarism. The issues of poverty and violence are cries waiting to be heard so that the

70 Ibid., viii.

71 Ibid., 2.

invisible protest of the powerless will be given voice.⁷²

She believes that the tendency to dichotomize in the church promotes sexism.

She says of the dichotomy:

Another trend within the Christian church that reinforces sexism is the tendency to dichotomize. Some of the common dichotomies are mind and body, thinking and feeling, practical politics and mysticism, and nature and divine reality. These dichotomies are almost always associated with a tendency to value one side of the dichotomy more than the other, and very often the more valued side is associated with men and the less valued side, with women.... These dichotomies are not simply distorted ways of thinking, but they serve a social function to label men and women and to value one over the other.⁷³

She is showing how these dichotomies function in the relationship between men and women in a society which has two spheres, the private and public. In other words, the public area in society has more value than the other, and this valued side of society is participated in primarily by men. According to this perspective, Moore thinks that women's problems are rooted in a limited participation, and that full participation can solve women's problems of poverty and violence.

The problem of poverty and violence signals a hope that problems of sexism would be addressed in relation to other social problems, such as racism and classism and war. The problem of limited participation creates a hope that the fullest

⁷² Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Women and Men in Social Order: Challenge to Religious Education," in *Religious Education as Social Transformation*, ed. Allen Moore, 72.

⁷³ Ibid., 80.

possible participation would be possible for women and men in the social order, including full public participation for women and full private participation for men.⁷⁴

Furthermore, she insists that the responsibility of religious educators is to lead people from the limitations and life-destruction that are part of a sexist social order toward freedom and life-nurture that are part of an inclusive social order.⁷⁵ She realizes that a prevailing concept in society must be produced, raised, and supported by a social system.

However, it does not seem to me that she successfully develops a practical way of doing this. Critiquing or analyzing the causes of social problems is not enough to empower women of poverty. She says, “what is important is that we educate in ways that will give persons courage to seek wisdom. What is important is that we offer resources to persons for their searching and visioning and that we support their actions in the direction of a new future.”⁷⁶ This does not show a willingness to eliminate the problems faced by women of poverty. The wisdom of which she speaks is that which enables people to recognize and nurture their gifts, to understand themselves as called to ministry, and to find avenues for using their gifts in service to the church and world.⁷⁷ However, she

⁷⁴ Ibid., 84.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 89.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 88.

does not say how to find courage to seek that wisdom, how to offer resources to persons, and how to support actions for the future. In spite of her enlarged perspective, the important aspect of doing or praxis is abstract.

One of the elements that makes Western feminist religious education build abstractions is its tendency not to see a contextual particularity--such as the women of poverty-- as much as it has focused on the fact that in Hess' words, "women's experience does not readily fit the portrayal of human nature that is based on male experience."⁷⁸ Most theories from Western feminist religious education do not develop a practical methodology of feminist religious education which reflects regional, cultural, and historical particularities. The purpose of a genuine feminist religious education has to shift from the description of universal liberation for all creation to the reconstruction of concrete liberation for a people in a particular context.

A Dialogue with Asian Feminist Theology

Asian feminist theologians contributions announce Asian woman's reality and create their own theology for the liberation of Asian women. Theologically, Asian feminist theologians have claimed new perspectives to see the traditions of Christianity. They interpret the Bible with new understandings of Christology,

⁷⁸ Hess, 50.

ecclesiology, Mariology and other theological themes. These are restated according to Asian women's experiences for creating a new direction to the future.

Insights from Asian Feminist Theology

One of the brilliant discoveries among the new theological efforts is that the common human experience of women in their liberation struggles constitutes a true source of theology.⁷⁹ One of their claims Asian women have had the opportunity to learn a special lesson--that without speaking of struggles against poverty and the multiple oppressions of Asian women, neither liberation nor theology can be spoken.

As a Korean woman who belongs to Asia, it is a privilege for me to trace the footprints of previous Asian feminist theologians realizing a similarity of women's location in capitalistic patriarchal society. It is for this reason that I must dialogue with Asian feminist theology. Their insightful writings open my eyes to other Asian women's situations and give me a will to work with them.

First of all, I realize that there are many different countries in Asia yet women's situation and experience are similar enough that it can offer a common

⁷⁹ Maya D'Rozario, "Bangladesh National Situation and Biblical Reflection," in *Asian Women Doing Theology: Report from Singapore Conference, November 20-29, 1987*, ed. Dulcie Abraham, Yvonne Dahlin, Stella M. Faria, Sally Moses, and Sun Ai Lee Park (Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, 1989), 26.

ground for Asian women's theologizing. Regarding the women's situation in Asia, Virginia Fabella says briefly.

About 80 percent still live below the poverty line and there are still many victims of harassment and violence. The majority of these are peasants, workers, tribal minorities, fisherfolk, urban poor, and the unemployed. And the majority of this majority are women.⁸⁰

With the double and triple burdens, Asian women's oppression comes in different combinations of political, economic, and religio-cultural oppressions within the underlying patriarchal domination.⁸¹

Women's situation in the church is not different from the society. Marginalized and impoverished women in society are easily treated with discrimination in the church. Nyunt Nyunt Thein's reports on the situation of Burmese woman in the church speaks to that problem:

In Burmese traditional culture men are always in the dominant position because man is thought to be superior and woman the subordinate. With this traditional conception and with the western concept of patriarchal domination, women of the Burmese church experience an almost irreversible depression in ecclesial set up. Religious women are given roles to participate in the activities of the church, but only to take care of church vestments, flower arrangement in the church, cleaning of the church, caring of the

⁸⁰ Virginia Fabella, "A Common Methodology for Diverse Christologies?," in *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1989), 110.

⁸¹ Mary J. Mananzan and Sun Ai Lee Park "Emerging Spirituality of Asian Women," in *With Passion and Compassion*, 79.

sick and the old people, social services and in teaching children in Sunday schools. In the major decision-making process in the church, only men are voted in or invited and the women present are coerced into silence during deliberations which are dominated by men.⁸²

In this situation, Asian women's own experiences are denied validity, and woman's personal encounter with God is denounced as heretical or hysterical.⁸³

Asian women's oppressive situation and experiences both in the church and society make it necessary for Asian feminist theologians to search for a new way of doing theology.

Korean feminist theologian Hyun Kyung Chung names Asian women's theology as the theology of "a cry, a plea, and an invocation."⁸⁴ She explains it in these words.

It is their tearful yearning for God's justice when there is no justice in Asian women's lives. It is also their prayer for God's healing presence in this war-making, people-killing, and nature-destroying world. Asian women's theology may not have an adequate systematic structure or the proper academic terminology in the traditional sense, but it arises out of women's experience of encountering God in their gut, feeling God in their heart, and communicating with God in their soul.⁸⁵

⁸² Nyunt Nyunt Thein, "Ecclesiology and Women," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 270.

⁸³ Henriette Katoppo, "Asian Theology: An Asian Woman's Perspective," in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity*, ed. Fabella, 143.

⁸⁴ Hyun Kyung Chung, *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1990), 99.

⁸⁵ Chung, 99.

This clearly shows that Asian women's reality and experiences are the most important source for transforming theology.

The second insight from Asian feminist theology is an effort to empower oppressed people, especially women, through re-interpreting theological themes in their contexts. It should be a goal of contextualization of theological themes. New images of Jesus, Mary and church emerge when Asian feminist theologians do theological works with their own eyes in order to empower oppressed Asian women.

Malaysian feminist theologian, Dulcie Abraham, raises a question about Jesus: "What does Jesus the new creation signify in the face of such poverty and suffering? How can Christology be made relevant in the face of the brutality and violence to which women continue to be submitted?"⁸⁶

To Asian women, Jesus is proclaimed, not as a triumphal king and an authoritative High Priest but as the prophetic Messiah. Jesus is confessed as a liberator who welcomes the sick, the weak, the oppressed, and rejected women in society.⁸⁷ Asian feminist theologians reject traditional Christology which has served to support a patriarchal religious consciousness and has justified male

⁸⁶ Dulcie Abraham, "Jesus the New Creation: Christology in the Malaysian Context," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 194.

⁸⁷ "Summary Statement on Christology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 165.

dominance over woman.⁸⁸ Rather, they understand Jesus in relation to Asian women. Abraham says:

The love and deep involvement of Jesus in the lives of the poor and oppressed resulted in a restoration and healing. Asian women are called to be participators in this life-giving ministry.... As co-workers with Christ we are called to suffer with him so that the work of redemption may continue and the new creation in Jesus may become a reality in Asia.⁸⁹

The new image of Jesus gives a power to Asian women to participate in a journey of liberation.

Including a challenge of new Christology to the traditional theology, Mariology is one of the important themes of Asian feminist theology. Jesus and Mary are two models of the fully liberated human being from whom Asian Christian women find their source of empowerment and inspiration.⁹⁰ In the third world, Mary is the one who gives strength to women. Aurora Zambrano says of Mary:

Mary did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicates the humble and oppressed, and unseats the powerful people of this world from their position of privilege. As disciple, Mary extols the work for justice in spreading the good news of salvation and in setting the oppressed free. Mary is declared as one who stands out among "the poor and humble of the Lord," a woman of strength who experienced poverty and suffering, flight and

88 Ibid., 165.

89 Ibid., 194.

90 Chung, 74-75.

exile as mothers in the Third World after experience under repressive governments.⁹¹

A similar understanding of Mary is shown in the writing of Korean feminist theologian, Kuk Yom Han.

Mary is the very agent of the Messiah's birth who liberates all the people who suffer politically, economically, and socially from the oppression of patriarchy, from political oppression and from economic poverty. Mary represents the suffering creation. Mary is the mark of the liberation and freedom of suffering people.⁹²

Receiving God's word, experiencing human suffering, and singing the Magnificat, Mary is the truly and fully liberated human being and is the model not only for women but also for men.⁹³

Through a theological re-interpretation of Mary, Asian feminist theologians not only show how they contextualize Mary's role and image but also uncover the importance of the hidden story in the Bible. It leads Asian women to read the Bible with their eyes.

⁹¹ Aurora Zambrano, "Mariology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et. Al., 225.

⁹² Kuk Yom Han, "Mariology as A Base for Feminist Liberation Theology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 239.

⁹³ Henriette Katoppo, "Asian Theology: An Asian Women's Perspective," in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1980), 150.

In addition to Christology and Mariology, Asian feminist theologians insist that the faith community has to be redeemed from a place of hierarchical domination to a place, which really reflects a community based upon just relationships.⁹⁴ Asian Christian women have served the church. The church, however, does not give opportunities for women to exercise their talents, express their potentialities, and engage in ministry. A partnership of equality between men and women has not formed. Therefore, one Asian feminist theologian, Sally Moses, claims:

The subject of ecclesiology and women has two dimensions: - 1. To motivate women's participation in order to build themselves to a better position; 2. To motivate women's participation in order to build up other women who are in a similar position in the context in which they live.⁹⁵

In this new idea of the church, women can contribute to build the just process of decision-making that restores the broken relationship between two genders. It will be a way to reform the church in Asia. Asian feminist theology is an area where women must open their eyes to discover new ways of being church.

From Asian feminists' theological efforts and insights, as one who has been involved fully in justice and peace work for a number of years in Korea, I

⁹⁴ "Summary Statement on Mariology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 220.

⁹⁵ Sally Moses, "Ecclesiology and Woman," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*. ed. Abraham et al., 268.

have the conviction that Korean women of poverty have been called for this new movement of building Korean feminist theology.

A Critique of Asian Feminist Theology

In spite of powerful insights of Asian feminist theology, a movement of Asian feminist theology has not spread among Christian women in Asia and the new theological ideas are not internalized in their lives. Although Asian feminist theologians search for the new theological meaning for women in Asia, not many women would be familiar with the figure of a liberation theology for women. Theologians have a deep concern for the poor women and their situation in Asia; however, they seem not to have tools to practice Asian feminist theology with women in the church. One reason is that the patriarchal church system and leaders are obstacles to the expansion of feminist theological thinking. The other is a famine of educational approaches for conscientization. These are serious problems Asian feminist theology still faces today.

Virginia Fabella says that many (Asian women) remain unaware of their class and gender oppression and simply live on with a "status quo"

Christology.⁹⁶ Through colonial experience, patriarchal culture, history, and

⁹⁶ Virginia Fabella, and Sun Ai Lee Park, in "Christology from an Asian Women's Perspective" *We Dare To Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*, ed. Fabella and Park (Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, 1989), 10.

religion, women have been made to stay in the situation of unawareness. In this situation, Asian feminist theology has to communicate with a theory of religious education to awaken Asian women in the church. The churches in Asia and their congregation members need to be educated and nurtured in a feminist way of teaching concerning an Asian feminist theology.

A proper education for Asian women in the church will give an opportunity to form a hopeful and liberated awareness against discriminations and injustices. This is why I write a practical theory of feminist religious education for empowering women of poverty. The feminist religious education for Asian women has to be holistic because Asian feminist theology hopes for the liberation of human beings and the transformation of society. Virginia Fabella says:

Women's ultimate goal is not just to gain more rights or a better status for themselves but a life-giving and truly mutual relationship among human beings, which involves the liberation of both women and men in a transformed society.⁹⁷

A theory of religious education for Asian women has to be created by Asian women's perspectives, experiences, and contexts. Its purpose will be empowering, embracing, and encouraging each women of oppression and poverty.

⁹⁷ Virginia Fabella, "A Common Methodology for Diverse Christologies?." in *With Passion and Compassion*, ed. Fabella and Oduyoye, 114-15.

Being challenged from Korean Minjung theology, Western feminist religious education, and Asian feminist theology, I would like to look at the situation of Korean religious education in order to argue that the Korean church needs a theory of religious education which has concern for the women of poverty.

The Situation of Religious Education in Korea from the Class and Gender Perspective

I have criticized Minjung theology from a gender perspective, Western feminist religious education theory from a perspective of class-consciousness, and Asian feminist theology from an educational perspective. These critiques show that the Korean church needs a feminist theory of religious education to challenge its classism and sexism. Since the middle of the 1980s Korean churches have witnessed the development of the Minjung church movement and female pastors have founded some Minjung churches. They have built worshiping communities among the poor and helped their lives. Female ministers and activists want a practical theory of religious education that focuses on their ministerial needs. They want the theory of religious education that empowers women of poverty and their children. However, seminaries and the Christian church do not have this as a priority.

During my nine years of seminary studies in Korea, I have never been educated in theological perspectives that address classism and sexism.

Recently, I searched the process of theological education of three representative seminaries in Seoul, South Korea, through their web sites.⁹⁸ They are two Presbyterian (Jangshin and Hanshin) seminaries and one Methodist seminary (Gamshin). Janshin has an "Introduction to Feminist Theology," "Women and Ministry," and "History of Women Education." Hanshin offers "Women and Religion," and "Feminist Theology." Gamshin has an "Introduction of Women Study," "Women and Religion, and Feminist Theology." In comparison to the past ten years, this is an improvement. However, they do not go beyond an introductory level of feminist thinking. A more comprehensive understanding of feminism and feminist theology is needed. Furthermore, there are no courses on feminist religious education in any seminary curriculum. Therefore, it will take a very long time for the development of particular themes of feminist education in Korean churches.

Outside of the seminary education context, women's groups from each denomination have developed their leadership education since the beginning of the Korean mission. The Presbyterian women's group in Korea has created various education programs such as female pastors retreats, leadership seminars, pastors' wives retreats, elders' wives retreats, conferences among

⁹⁸ Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary : <http://www.pcts.ac.kr>
Hanshin University: <http://www.hanshin.ac.kr>
Methodist Theological Seminary: <http://mts.ac.kr>

female seminarians, retreats for pastors' wives of rural areas, and so on.⁹⁹

Programs to introduce feminist thinking, social consciousness and a concern for the poor are replaced with programs that encourage the formulation of devoted church-women who support ministry, build relationships with other members of the church, and manage their families in a Christian manner.¹⁰⁰ This is one of the reasons that women stay in roles of submission and sacrificial service even though women members are more than 70% of the population of Christian Churches in Korea. In addition, there is the tendency for female leadership in the church to come from only the upper-and-middle class which makes clear the reality that women of poverty are marginalized in both the church and among women's groups as well.

The situation of the church that produces a theology of status quo gives power to the haves, turns its face from the poor, and ignores women's voices. This situation needs to be changed, and a feminist theory of religious education which is empowering to women of poverty will contribute to that change. This is the main reason why I am writing a dissertation.

⁹⁹ Yeon Ok Lee, *Daehan Yeasugyo Jangro Hoe Yoejundo Hoe Baekyonsa (A History of 100 Years of Korean Presbyterian Women)* (Seoul: Sinang Kwa Jisungsa, 1998), 127- 40.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 140.

From the theological and educational situation in Korea, I have been challenged to formulate a theory of religious education for women of poverty. The next chapter will show Mary(s) in current Korean society who are in need of feminist religious education.

CHAPTER 3

Who is “Mary?”: A Description of Women of Poverty

My personal experience with women laborers and what I have learned during the course of my study of various theologies and feminist scholarship have led me to realize a need for a transforming theory to bring about the liberation of poor women in Korea. Before creating that theory, I decided it would be necessary for me to meet real Korean women of poverty, to see their real situation and to listen to their articulation of what they needed. I named each of these women Mary. Before I introduce the Mary(s) in Korea, I would like to explain how I was able to meet women for this study, as well as where and when these meetings came about.

Description of Methodology and Interviews

First I will explain the methodology that I have studied through the PAR (Participatory Action Research), also called PR (Participatory Research) or AR (Action Research.) My reason for choosing PAR is that this methodology focuses on specific contexts and demands that theory and action not be separated, and it is committed to the idea that the test of any theory is its capacity to resolve problems in real-life situations.¹

¹ Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (Thousand Oaks Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998), 75.

Participatory Research is a method of social investigation of problems, involving participation of oppressed and ordinary people in problem posing and solving.² It aims at three types of change, including the following:

Development of critical consciousness of both researcher and participants; improvement of the lives of those involved in the research process; and transformation of fundamental societal structures and relationships.³

Beyond simple statistical research, its purpose is to change the fundamental causes of the problems using various kinds of research techniques. Many traditional research tools and techniques can be used but there are principles that must be followed to allow them to be acceptable as well as useful.

Greenwood and Levin's book mentions the principle social research techniques:

Action Researchers accept no a priori limits on the kinds of social research techniques they use. Surveys, statistical analyses, interviews, focus groups, ethnographies, and life histories are all acceptable, if the reason for deploying them has been agreed on by the AR collaborators and if they are used in a way that does not oppress the participants.⁴

² Maguire, 30.

³ Ibid., 30.

⁴ Greenwood and Levin, 7.

Mutual agreement and respectful attitudes among collaborators are insisted on in the process of research. Participants in the research process have a chance to be educated while they are developing skills in collecting, analyzing, and utilizing information.⁵ Therefore, Maguire believes that as a potentially liberating process, participatory research provides a way for people to develop an increasingly critical understanding of social problems, their underlying causes, and possibilities for overcoming them.⁶

I used the interview as a main research tool for my dissertation, keeping these understandings and principles in mind throughout the interviewing process. Formulating a transforming theory of religious education should be an integral part of the liberating process such that it cannot be separated from the methodology I used and the content I will design.

Through my participation in the movements of Minjung theology and Minjung Church in Korea, I have learned to understand poor women's lives and experiences and I have established a trustable relationship with them and with activists. This has enabled me to have a sense of being an insider who is able to recognize women's everyday experiences, difficulties, emotions, feelings, and expressions. I have also a sense of being an outsider. Living outside of their

⁵ Maguire, 31.

⁶ Ibid., 31.

contexts, I have studied in an academic environment for many years.

Geographically and physically, I am an outsider. However, this does not mean that I have no relationship with them. Rather, I try to be the outsider who brings a critical yet empathetic knowledge of poor women in order to engage in their lives in a meaningful way. As both an insider and outsider of the context in which women of poverty are living, I tried to focus on letting my questions help them to express their realities and hopes without forcing them into an oppressive and awkward position.

Description of Women and Shelters

During July of 2002 I interviewed 33 women including activists and women of poverty in Korea. As I have written in the chapter, I visited shelters, Minjung churches, and local institutions and centers for supporting women in struggles.

The Women Involved in the Study.

Activists' ages are ranged from 41 to 50 years old and they have worked in ministry from 10 to 20 years. Most of the other women's ages ranged between 30 and 40, while a few were in their 50s.

Shelters Visited as Part of This Study.

I visited four shelters. Among the four, three shelters are located in Seoul and one is in a rural location. Two shelters were part of Minjung churches, one is a mission center, and one is not related to Christian mission. They have existed for 10 to 20 years, some even longer.

Sam Il Church and Women's Shelter. This is a Minjung church whose members are mostly women and children. After the woman pastor Tae Hyo Chung came to this church, she developed worship services and various programs for women. Sam Il provides a women's shelter that supports homeless women and their children who have been victimized by Korea's current socio-economic situation and by domestic violence. Some of them are struggling with psychological problems. This church cares for around 20 homeless women by supporting economic activities, networking with rehabilitation programs, consulting with the legal process of divorce, and caring for their children.

Song Hyun Sam Church and Women's House. This is also a Minjung church. Pastor In Hyung Cho serves this church and counseling center for women, called "Women's House." Her ministry focuses not only on women of poverty and their children but also on regional problems. This local church responds to problems of residents such as environmental issues and elderly people who live alone.

Sae Ter Church. Sae Ter is very small church which has 43 adult members (16 men and 27 women) and 21 children and youth. A woman pastor, Hoo Im Park serves this church which represents one of many Minjung churches. Usually, 30 adults participate in the Sunday worship. This church has no elders because members are under 40 years old which is a minimum required age for eldership. Therefore, they have a different structure from other churches. Sae Ter church is a lay centered community. The members of the women's group that I worked with explain that their church has a democratic structure and decision-making process. They participate in works of the church as their own works. Some women serve as the working staff for social programs in the church such as the infant-care, child-care, and study-help programs for children of low-income people. The women whom I had met in this church wanted to create a vision for their church community.

Do Bong Women's House. This too is a center for supporting women of poverty. Since the early 1980s its pastor Mi Ran Yoo has been committed to the movement of liberation for the urban poor and their children. Inspired by her passion, this center cares for poor children. They can eat, rest, and play in this house. They are embraced, comforted, and nurtured with love and vision. This house is a fruit of her efforts and tears. This house is also a production community. It provides a place of work for women and produces organic cosmetics. The profits from the production are spent for the economic supports

of the staffs, the management the center, and women of poverty served by this center. Unlike most Minjung churches, centers, and shelters, Do Bong Women's House has financial independence.

The Leftovers Mission Center. As a non-profit government organization, Leftovers Mission Center has served women and children of poverty since the early 1980s. With her great compassion for poor children and women, woman pastor Myung Soon Kang has endured many difficulties. Leftovers Mission Center provides Gong Boo Bang (study rooms for the poor children), Joyful House (a shelter for the children), Mihndllae House (a house for sexually abused girls), a credit union (a bank for supporting women of poverty), and so on.

Counseling Center for Women. This center has been built through the efforts of Korean Presbyterian women. It provides counseling opportunities and a hot line for women who endure domestic violence and discrimination in the church.

Ahn Sahn Borderless Village. Borderless Village is a center for foreign laborers who mostly come from South-East Asia. It has a counseling center and shelter for them. Pastor Chun Eung Park started his ministry in a Minjung church at the city of Ahn Sahn, one of the industrial cities around Seoul. One day, foreign laborers who did not have any job, money, home, or legal status come to his church and he realized their realities and problems. Counseling

them and fighting for their human rights against capitalists, he has built Borderless Village as part of his dream for liberating poor foreign workers. Recently, it has begun an effort to build a center for supporting foreign women laborers and their children. The Korean government does not give citizenship to children of foreign people even though they are born in Korea. Therefore, the problem of illegal foreign women workers and their children has been raised as a new issue of human rights and this center takes care of them.

Conducting the Study

Fortunately, I have known directors and activists who have been working in these places since the 1980s. All of them participated in social movements during the 1970s, '80s, and '90s as seminarians and pastors and they have chosen a ministry for the poor. Penetrating through the social turmoil of the '80s together, they and I learned to trust each other as colleagues who share a passion and have shared the struggle for social reformation and renewal of church. I have on-going communication with some of them on the theme of my study. The trusting relationship that we have built gave me easy access to poor women. These colleagues play a role as brokers between the women of poverty and me. The activists have been pleased not only to grant me an interview but also to introduce me to the women. Furthermore, they asked women to support

my interview process and arranged the schedule of interviews with the women who participated in this study.

Interviews with women were conducted at the office of shelter, church, or center excepting interviews with activists who could manage their times more flexibly. These meetings were conducted at the office, restaurant, or coffee shop. Women of poverty did not have extra time to meet for interviews in the daytime or on weekdays; therefore we met on Sundays' afternoons or after 8 o'clock p.m. when they came back from their work places. Interviews with activists were done individually and other interviews were done group style. The sizes of the groups ranged from two to seven.

I began each interview, wearing blue jeans and a plain shirt, by introducing myself. I gave them my personal history and experiences in brief, told what I had studied in the United States, explained why I asked them to meet, how the interviews will be used for my dissertation and why I wanted to record the interview process. They allowed me to record it and agreed that I could quote their spoken words for my dissertation. I used a tape recorder for recording and decoded the interviews by myself in Korean, and then I translated into English the parts that I needed to quote for this dissertation. Questions asked in the interview are in an appendix. The questions that I asked women including the activists were open-ended questions that could expose their important problems, issues, hopes and realities. Based upon their answers,

stories, contexts and realities, I classified the women of poverty into four categories (chapter 3), inferred their dreams (chapter 4), and interpreted biblical meanings (chapter 5). In this chapter, I describe the Mary(s) in Korea.

Mary(s) in Korea

Since 1997, Korean society has been maturing in democracy. However, due to its unstable political and economic situation, social development has been hindered, and so the International Monetary Fund stepped in. In an instant, people lost their jobs, small businesses collapsed, and families were broken. As a result, the number of people living in poverty increased rapidly and their situation has become a major social problem. During this time, in ways that were both hidden and apparent, women workers have been sacrificed in the restructuring process. Looking at the ratio of employees by sex (the figure shows the percent of females employed) and comparing before and after the year 1997, we find that the percent of women employees has been decreasing alarmingly.

Employees by Position and Sex (% of female/male)⁷

Year	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992	1990	1985
Rate	44.5	42.8	36.8	38.0	39.0	40.6	40.2	46.3	44.9	47.7	53.9

⁷ Statistics of Employees by Position and Sex from KWDI.

The ratio of female to male employees shows 1998 to be the lowest in a 13 year period.

The “Polity and Information Center for International Solidarity” reports on jeopardized women workers:

Women workers were working in industries most vulnerable to the economic instability and restructuring in the first place, and during the mass lay-offs, they were told to leave for the sake of saving their husbands, who were and are considered as breadwinners. With the wage cuts and instability of the jobs for all workers regardless of gender, everyone knew that one breadwinner is just not enough to maintain a household--yet the economic crisis and the restructuring was an excellent chance to propagandize the traditional patriarchal values of the infamous ‘the woman’s place is at home.’⁸

In many cases, the priority of lay-offs of women workers was proposed by either the capitalists or the bureaucratic leaders of the trade unions.⁹ According to the National Statistics Office, the unemployment rate of men rose from 2.8%(1997) to 7.6(1998) and that of women rose from 2.3% to 5.6% during the same period.¹⁰ However, PICIS criticizes these statistics as follows:

⁸ Policy and Information Center for International Solidarity, PICIS Special Series on Globalization and Korean Women: Part 1: The Scape-Goats of Economic Crisis: The Consequences of the Economic Crisis and Neo-Liberalist Policies on Korean Women Workers, PICIS Newsletter Issue 78 (12/19/00), 1. web site: <http://picis.jinbo.net/english/women/series.htm>

⁹ PICIS, 1.

¹⁰ Statistics of Economically Active Population by Type of Household and Sex from the National Statistics Office. <http://www.2.kwdi.re.kr> (Korean Women’s Development Institute).

There seems to be no difference between men and women, but these numbers do not explain the reality. A great number of women are discouraged workers, i.e. they were convinced that they should 'self-willingly' quit their jobs for the sake of men. Those who survived this manipulation were re-employed as part-time workers, thus excluding them from the economically active population and in turn, decrease the unemployment rate.¹¹

Inclusion of information on this manipulation of statistics and women's status provides a clearer insight into how increasingly difficult women's lives have become in Korean society, especially since the IMF entered the situation in 1997.

In a phenomenon called 'feminization of poverty,' women became an absolute majority of the population living in poverty, after being forced out of the mainstream and to the periphery of social life. In staggering levels of unemployment and an awareness of social failure, males in Korean society vented their hidden frustrations against their spouses and families in negative and often violent acts. In turn, as women fled these situations, they were thrown into the shackles of poverty and increasing numbers of women became heads of families without homes.

These women will be described in four categories such as outcasts: women in shelters and foreign migrant women laborers, women in multiple crises, children of broken families living in poverty, and women who voluntarily choose poverty.

¹¹ PICIS, 1.

Outcasts: Women in Shelters and Foreign Migrant Women Laborers

These women are the 'Mary(s)' of the Korean society. I will now describe these Mary(s) in greater detail.

Women in Shelters. Comparing women's shelters with men's shelters in Seoul, the main difference is that women are often there with their children. Women, unlike men, are forced out of their homes with the burden of having to take care of their children. This increases their desire for survival as well as the drive to become self-supporting. They come to the shelters exhausted physically, emotionally, and psychologically. In many cases, women escaped from their homes and husbands, wandering from place to place, arriving at shelters as a last resort. These women left the home for many reasons other than economic hardship, they were escaping domestic violence, substance abuse by the spouse, verbal abuse, suspicion, intrigue, sexual abuse, and even incest. Grace,¹² one of members in women's shelter, said, "I have tried to endure my husband's infidelity but I could not forbear his violent behaviors and misconduct to my kids. He is not a human but a beast."¹³ The depression of poverty and the

¹² I use a pseudonym except for activists and pastors. Interviews with women of poverty were done in women's shelters, counseling centers, caring centers, and Minjung churches in Seoul and Incheon during July 2002. Interview with Grace Kim at Sam Il Shelter in July 2002.

¹³ Interview with Esther Lee at Sam Il Shelter in July 2002.

evil of her husband's abuse caused intolerable suffering and pushed her into absolute poverty.

Esther married her husband in January of 1996. She struggled and worked to survive through her husband's long unemployment. They were forced to abandon their home and moved into a motel with their two children. When he became violent towards the family, she left him with the children. She wept, "There was no other way except to run away from him but I don't know how to live with these poor kids. It is too hard to get a job with my babies. I just want to stay longer here (shelter) until my babies have grown more."¹⁴ It is very difficult for women with children to find jobs because they were the first to be affected under the IMF situation. In the case of women who are under-educated and married, they are the last to get jobs. Without the social support system abused women and children of broken homes are unable to escape from this prison of poverty.

In fact, most of the women in shelters whom I interviewed did not have college degrees and had struggled with poverty in their families for more than two generations. Because of the experiences of being forsaken by the parents, husbands, and society, of being beaten by their husbands and suffering sexual abuses, while struggling to survive in poverty, these women's psychological

¹⁴ Esther was living in the shelter with her two children.

conditions were unstable to say the least. Some of them suffered from chronic nervousness. Others had low self-esteem, had anxiety, experienced anger, felt persecuted, had nervous breakdowns, and overall suffered from self-defeatism. They needed a shelter which provided a comforting, feeding, healing, and nurturing environment. They are Marys who are looking for the Elizabeths who embrace and empower them. In this dissertation I argue that this is an appropriate role of religious education.

Foreign Migrant Women Laborers. Most Asian countries are steeped in poverty. Since 1970, their labor has helped other countries become richer, especially those in the Middle East and North East Asia, but at their own expense. The number of Asian migrant laborers in South Korea showed a rapid increase in 1990. Currently, 300,000 foreign migrant workers are living in South Korea. Women workers are one third of them. Undocumented aliens are close to 63% of the total number of migrant workers.¹⁵ The Korean government established a policy for migrant trainees in order to fill the needs of the working population of the domestic industries. This policy allows the foreign migrant trainee to stay legally for two years in Korea. Because the numbers of migrant laborers exceeds the job opportunities, the abusive brokers can take advantage

¹⁵ Cheon Eung Park, *Kook Kyung Upneon Maueul II* (The Borderless Village II) (AanSan: AanSan Shelter for Foreign Workers, 2000), 192.

of foreign workers offering unreasonable compensation for intermediary work and manual labor. Many of these workers come to Korea laden with debt, expecting to become debt-free through working hard. However, jobs are available to them in Korea are those with low pay, often involving labor exploitation. Workers quickly realize that it will be impossible to pay back debts and save enough money in two years at the assigned working place. Within the two-years period most foreign migrant workers desert their jobs looking for a better job as an illegal sojourner.

In 1996, four Indian laborers who escaped from the factory in which they were working had a press conference. They testified that they had been severely exploited. They worked 16 hours a day, had 20 minutes for meals, and had been paid 70,000 Won (equivalent to U.S. \$60.00.) a month which was less than the one-day allowance for an ordinary Korean laborer. They said, "We were always hungry. We came to Korea because we were hungry. However, we have been hungrier than we were in India. We want to live."¹⁶

These days, there are more than 160,000 illegal migrant workers in Korea from China, Nepal, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan.¹⁷ Their ages range from 20 to 30 years and they are highly

¹⁶ Park, *Borderless Village I*, 127.

¹⁷ Park, *Borderless Village II*, 176.

educated. Working conditions are dirty, difficult, and dangerous. They work in textiles, sewing, leather, and electronics assembling factories.¹⁸ They struggle with bad working conditions, low-wages, and inhumane treatment.

Needless to say, foreign migrant women workers suffer the worst situations. As a pastor, counselor, and activist, Cheon Eung Park is working at Ansan Migrant Shelter called "Borderless Village." He said:

Before IMF situation started, laborers meant laborers. There is no class among laborers but now many classes among laborers are subdivided such as regular laborers, irregular laborers, irregular day laborers, and foreign migrant laborers. Female migrant laborers are at the lowest bottom of it. Especially, they are the objects of sexual harassment, sexism, and ignorance from male laborers.¹⁹

They are treated as outcasts in Korean society. It was impossible to interview certain migrant laborers because they had to work day and night with their illegal status. Their stories were collected from interviews and some are quoted from activists and monthly bulletins published by Ansan Migrant Shelter.

In October 2000, Vietnamese female laborer Reah was killed by cephalic damage at the hands of a male laborer. She came to Korea in May and, five months later, after enduring severe exploitation, she died. One book that was in front of her portrait was a textbook for learning Korean and some words were

¹⁸ Park, *The Borderless Village II*, 192.

¹⁹ Cheon Eung Park at the Borderless Village in July 2002.

written, "Do not beat me," "Why does man beat woman?" "Do not speak bad words to me," and "Show me details of my salary."²⁰

Unfortunately, this is not an exceptional case among foreign women laborers. In one instance, Korean police arrested a Chinese woman named Young without telling her the reason and then proceeded to torture and sexually abuse her. She was told she had been arrested on a charge of murder. After the abuse she was released; however she was warned that if she should speak about her torture she would be re-arrested and, because she held illegal status, she would be expelled from Korea. When the shelter where she was staying found out the abuse they encouraged her to reveal the truth and demand retribution, Young said, "It is fine to be bruised on my body but not my heart. It is so painful. I wish that the foreign laborers would not be treated like me."²¹

These people are economic refugees who are looking for jobs, food, home, and hope. They are outcasts in a society that needs to provide them equal rights and opportunities for fair labor, life, and a chance for happiness. Foreign migrant laborers, especially, women laborers are Marys who are looking for Elizabeths in this global society.

Women in Multiple Crises

²⁰ Park, *Borderless Village II*, 74.

²¹ Park, *Borderless Village II*, 131.

Most Korean women have suffered from sexism under a patriarchal Confucian culture. However, the degrees of discrimination that women have experienced differ according to the individual and social conditions of each woman. For example, there are differences in wages, job opportunities, and social treatments between highly educated and under-educated women. Therefore, uneducated or less educated women struggle to overcome their circumstances and the cycles of poverty. This means that women in poverty are living with multiple forms of discriminations. These women are especially vulnerable in economic crises like the system of IMF. Women workers in urban industries were the first targets of the layoffs for the restructuring of the economic system under IMF. In the patriarchal way of thinking, men are considered breadwinners so that women are not allowed to work but rather must stay at home and care for children. Women in the work force are not considered primary, but only secondary, participants. The economic crisis of society justifies gender discrimination. The present form of capitalism accompanied by the culture of patriarchy has made women's position increasingly vulnerable and has exposed them to even greater exploitation.²² One pastor in a Minjung Church, In Hyung Cho,²³ says of these women:

²² A Workshop Paper, "Globalization and Spirituality: Towards a Holistic and Proactive Response," Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) 2000 People's Forum: People's Action and Solidarity Challenging Globalization, Workshop on Globalization and Spirituality, Seoul/October 16-19, 2000 (ASEM: Seoul, 2000), 4.

I think that women in multiple crises are those who are deprived from rights to work and live. Especially, the less-educated women are always exposed to the lay-off under the instable economic situation. In fact, a great number of women are fired and looking for work such as restaurants, small factory, daily work, public labor, etc. in order to survive and care for their children. If their husbands do not have jobs, women have to take charge domestic and financial affairs, and even endure husbands' feudalistic attitudes done from the loss of self-confidence. These women do not have time and place to rest. Their burdens are too heavy to carry....²⁴

Women of poverty struggle with these multiple crises. With multiple difficulties, physical exhaustion from hard working conditions and an uncertain future, many of them suffer from constant anxiety and low self-esteem. A woman says of herself:

My parents were very poor and they could not afford to send me to college. When I came to Seoul, I decided to work for one month at a factory and then I wanted to go to college. It was not that easy... In 1988, a labor union was established in my working place and I become a union leader. It broke my sense of inferiority and self-reproach. I was proud of being born again as a woman labor at that time. No matter what kind of ability I had, I was glad that I tried to do my best. I believed that if I worked very hard with all my efforts and heart, I would survive. In 1994, I got married with one of my colleagues and I have two children. As a mom, wife, and laborer, however, now I feel I am not happy. I don't feel a pride on myself any more. I don't know why. I have to take care of my children and I want them to grow well. Thinking about myself, I am just surrounded by worries about my children, family matters, my health, and

²³ In Hyung Cho is a senior pastor of Song Hyun Sam Church in Incheon. She is working for community development through her ministry including an after school program, counseling center for women, food bank, and visiting program for single older people.

²⁴ Interview with In Hyung Cho, a pastor of Song Hyun Sam Church, July 2002.

money.... If I get sick, who is going to take care for my children? The financial situation is so difficult and I feel like I am shrinking. I hate myself. I am not caring for other people but housekeeping overwhelms me. I am living without any thought. That makes me feel like a fool. I want to live stately as a fine woman laborer like I used to.²⁵

This joyless, anxious, and tired voice comes from poverty, gender discrimination, economic crisis, and the responsibility of child rearing. Korean society does not advocate for married women workers who must struggle by themselves to work and to raise children. As a result, most women give up their jobs and social activities and restrict themselves to nurturing children. This kind of environment becomes a trap for poor women. They want to survive, to go on with their lives. Yet they cannot give up either working or caring for their children. How is it possible to escape from this dilemma? Women in multiple crises are in critical danger of losing their families, their jobs, and even their self-identities.

Rev. Hae Ran Kim, the director of a Counseling Center for Women of the National Organization of the Korean Presbyterian Women, says that the most difficult cases among clients are those who have no self-identity, no sense of agency and who have internalized other people's rules, principles, and values. According to her, these women are helpless against such external attacks as domestic violence, sexism, and poverty. One woman whom I met at this center said to me, "I think that divorce is a sin because I learned it from my pastor and

²⁵ Interview with Kyung Ja Kim, a member of Sae Teo Church, July 2002. This church is a women's Minjung church.

the Bible. I need someone who gives a right direction I can follow. I do not know what I have to do.”²⁶ She was struggling with domestic violence but her internalized value about marriage and women that she learned from the church did not allow her to see alternative ways to break free from her painful situation. Women who are caught in multiple crises are very weak and submissive because they have never lived as owners of their lives. They have been controlled by patriarchal tradition, religion, and culture. They have been isolated from new values, information, and even technology that would enable them to direct and support their lives.

Most women activists agree that women of poverty fall into that status because of socio-economic difficulties, cultural expectations, and psychological alienation. Poor women are also marginalized from cultural benefits. For them, it is hard to gain access to helpful information, even from common resources like the internet. They often don't avail themselves of public services due to a lack of time or awareness, they have no funds for education, and do not know how to maneuver through available supportive systems. In addition to the concrete obstacles such as lack of financial resources they are hindered psychologically by a sense of inferiority. These women need to be empowered. They need someone to whom they can turn. They need a shelter from the storms that

²⁶ Interview with Eun Hee Lee, a client at Counseling Center for Women, July 2002.

batter their spirits. They need guidance to embrace them. They need something to integrate their fragmented lives and selves. Women in multiple crises are Mary, and they are looking for Elizabeth to touch their lives, to awaken their song, to help them survive in this capitalistic and patriarchal society.

Children of Broken Families Living in Poverty

I include children of broken families living in poverty in the category of the women in poverty. They exist in the midst of poverty. As Mi Ran Yoo, one social activists working with women and children in poverty, states:

I think that the notion of Minjung has to include the children of poverty in it. It means that the theology and church should concern themselves with these children. In the past there is a strong tendency not to break their families and to care for children by any means but currently, so many parents are abandoning their children. These abandoned children could easily become involved in the gangs and the pleasure business for making quick money because they believe that poverty destroys their families and take parents away from them. One day, a sixteen-year-old girl called me at midnight and asked me to find a rich family to adopt her. *The value system on life of parents and children in poverty is shaking.* In the situation of economic crisis, the poor irresponsible parents are abandoning their children and children in poverty are leaving their hopeless home or forced to leave their home. Unfortunately, this is a kind of reproduction system of Minjung.²⁷

The economic condition in Korea under IMF has caused massive lay-offs, increasing an already severe disparity between the rich and the poor. Economic hardship has the added result of producing an increased number of broken

²⁷ Interview with Mi Ran Yoo, the director of Do Bong Women's House, July 2002.

families. This greatly increases the number of children who are deserted and neglected by their parents and society. They live in hunger, desperation, and misery. Furthermore, they are exposed to numerous unhealthy and dangerous situations: malnutrition, school truancy, low self-esteem, prostitution and gang activities. For their own sake and the sake of society in the future, these children need care and support. A woman pastor of a Minjung church, In Hyung Cho, says:

Having served a Minjung church for many years, I feel that the poor people are getting worse spiritually and psychologically in a society dashing forward with materialism, individualism, and the 'efficiency first' principle. In this situation the poor children are most vulnerable. They are deprived of their opportunities for human development. Minjung churches have to support them so that they will feel that the church empathizes with them and they deserve to be loved by God. It is important to provide a support system to those children who are encircled by the poverty so that it may not destroy their lives but give them hope to live by.²⁸

When children do not have a place to grow in a protected environment and they feel that they are deserted by others, their wounds deepen and fester. Yoo explains about children's pains:

Currently, the dissolved families, runaway husbands, and families in crisis are increasing in our society. The area around this house is not an exception. The children of poor families are coming to our center. They live with their grandparents, single mothers, or single fathers. The majority of the children are the ones who live with their single mothers. Always the responsibility of child caring has been given to mothers. If children are living with single grandparent, it means that they have been

28 Interview, In Hyung Cho.

abandoned by their mothers. Anyway..., the children in poverty who lack caring have a lot of pains, fears, and doubts. They are hungry, exhausted, and seized with anxiety. They cannot even maintain eye contact with teachers or me during the first few weeks in this house. You know what? During the first few weeks, they neither play nor fight each other. Even though they have been living in violent environments. Do you know why? They are too hungry to fight.²⁹

Economic hardship has deprived children of both family and childhood. Tae Hyo Jung, senior pastor of Sam Il Church and women's shelter, says, "anger-filled mothers in the shelter use their children as a vent to express their anger very easily. They shout at and beat their children."³⁰ Mothers take their children when leaving home, but children often have to endure their mother's wrath at her circumstances. All children in the shelters have suffered pain from their parents. Having come from unhealthy homes, children often mirror the same behavioral traits of their fathers, such as abusive language and unruly actions. Children are victimized by their father's violent behavior and hurt again by their mother's inconsistent behavior that alternates between protection and abuse in an already frightening and unstable situation.

²⁹ Interview, Mi Ran Yoo.

³⁰ Interview with Tae Hyo Jung, the pastor of Sam Il Shelter, July 2002.

When reaching out to children in poverty other important variables must also be considered. Myung Soon Kang, the director of Leftovers Mission Center,³¹ points out how we should see this problem:

The problem of children was not just caused by hunger but also by emotional and psychological instability. The children feel that nobody cares for them. They starve and are beaten. It is not uncommon for fathers to abuse girl children both physically and sexually. These girl children are the second generation of poverty. The poverty of parents caused by a hostile social structure is passed on from parents to children. If we want to solve children's problems, we have to solve parents' problems. In order to solve their problems, we have to solve the problems that create poverty in society.³²

Myung Soon Kang insists that the problems of the poor can be solved by adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach that encompasses not only the economical but also the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of poverty.³³ Basically, the wounds of children in poverty are caused by the situation of a socio-economic crisis. An individual family alone cannot cure the

³¹ Leftovers Mission Center has provided an integrated system of social welfare services to children living in poverty.

³² Interview with Myung Soon Kang, the director of Leftover Mission Center, July 2002.

³³ Myung Soon Kang, *Bingon Haechae Gajung Ahdongyl Byunhwa mit Sahoe Bokgie Tonghapjuckin Jupkun Yungu* (A Study of the Integrative Approach to Social Work and Change of Poor Children from Broken Families), M.A. thesis, Kangnam University, Seoul, 2000, 166.

wounds. Korean society and the churches have to build a support system in order to heal their wounds and help mend broken families.

The children of broken families living in poverty are also Marys in our society. They, too, are looking for Elizabeth in order to survive, to be comforted, and nurtured.

Women Who Voluntarily Choose Poverty

In this fourth section, I will introduce the voices of women who choose poverty voluntarily. They are neither outcasts of society nor women living in shelters. These activist women live and work with women and children in crisis. They have endured the turmoil of Korean society in the '70s and '80s with its pains, struggles, passions, and dreams for justice and liberation. As I interviewed them, I realized that they are theologians, pilgrims, liberators, and saints. Theology and faith, belief and life, dream and reality, and tears and laughs are integrated in their chosen life style. It is not an easy feat. They have tried their best to bring about social change and conscientization of Minjung-based communities. However, they have felt something lacking in that process. Pastor Cho, from one of the Minjung churches, and Yoo, a director of a women's house, reflected on their experiences as following:

During the 70s and 80s, it was important to encourage Minjung to be a subjective power for the social movements. Because of the urgent task of social transformation, keeping the principle of movement was more focused than considering a real situation of the poor or the value of

human life. It was hard to admit that it was true and it was a limitation of our social movement that took place in the past.³⁴

Another woman, Pastor Park, says:

Once, we had objectified Minjung as the subject for change our society, even Minjung theologians and churches have named them as the subject of democratic movement. As a source of social change, the power of massive Minjung was given more consequential than their individual lives.³⁵

From these reflections, they tried to search the meanings of ministry, life, and social movement. Pastor Cho continues:

From this thinking, I decided to work with women in poverty in order not to make a mistake again. I think that women's movement or the role of women can give life to people and supplement the movement of Minjung church. Women love life. Women respect people. I trust women's vision and their hope.³⁶

Due to the limitations of Christian social movements that are male-centered, and task-focused, women activists and pastors searched out new movements that are based on the particularities that women faced. Hae Ran Kim says the following about the value of women:

³⁴ Interview, In Hyung Cho.

³⁵ Interview, Hoo Im Park.

³⁶ Interview, Im Hyung Cho

The reasons why I am doing this work are that I realize women are awesome beings and want to share this idea with women in pain. I feel the universe is alive when women are touching, healing, and empowering each other.³⁷

For her, women's life energy is connected with the universe.

A pastor of a Minjung church for women in poverty contributes her reflections on the past and the meaning of this church.

The person who admits one's weakness can see ways to help as s/he sees the weak. In the past, we tried not to see our weakness or limitation. Faith is to admit and expose one's limitation. I believe in the living Word of God that helps me overcome my limitation and myself when I am frustrated. Socially defined values cannot change human beings. The Minjung church has developed various beneficial programs for the residents. However, I feel that many churches have a tendency to focus their ministry on doing programs. Ministry is caring for people and their lives. If we just put on the programs, it will be a business. The ministry has to meet people through the programs. I like to meet people. I like to work with women in poverty. I love my work that I can touch people's lives. Life is important. This is why I choose this kind of ministry. My salary is less than one thousand dollars but I feel free from the monetary concern. I think that a movement does not mean a change of condition but a change of being. In a capitalist society, our movement has to be done by an alternative value which comes from the new world Jesus has proclaimed. I believe that my community is small but it is a movement and hope that can make the nature, people, and society to live. A continuous relationship that we have made together restores us. This community has nurtured me as a pastor. In a capital society, it is hard to live as an individual but living in this small community respecting every single life gives energy to live.³⁸

37 Interview with Hae Ran Kim, the director of Counseling Center for Women, July 2002.

38 Interview, Hoo Im Park.

She is creating a living tapestry of her life, a tapestry which includes her profession as a minister, the movement to create a just Korean society, her dedication as a feminist to change the lives of women and children of poverty, all energized and unified by her optimistic love of life.

This is also heard in Mi Ran Yoo's journey of life.

After graduating from the seminary, I worked at one of the large churches in Seoul. From the first moment of interview, senior pastor told me that the most important role of a woman associate pastor is to serve the senior pastor. I was skeptical about that role. Three years later, I resigned. I felt that something was missing in my life. After that experience, I moved to one of the poorest areas in Seoul. I started a work in my room. Working as a laborer, caring for children in poverty, involving myself with the problem of poverty, and fighting against dictators, I realized that it was God's call for me. Almost twenty years long, I have worked with women and their children in poverty. Now, the children raised in my community are working as staff and volunteers. Our work is 'recycling.' Mothers who were students in a Korean literary class are volunteering as teachers for that class. I have really tried to be a Minjung. I found that if women in poverty realize a social mechanism producing an inequality between the rich and the poor, men and women, and the educated and the less-educated, then they are changing. They do not think that an individual well-being is not the end in itself. They are poor but they are not weak. They are hungry but they are not selfish. This is the spirit of poverty. I believe that this spirit brings a power to overcome their situation and change an unjust society. Being with them, I am blessed.³⁹

In her community we find the power of commitment, sharing, solidarity, and compassion. This power comes from women who have experienced similar

³⁹ Interview, Mi Ran Yoo.

discriminations caused by poverty, a patriarchal culture, and an unjust social system.

Pastor Cho comments on the difference between system and community.

She says:

Doing this work for last thirteen years, what I have felt is that the most important thing is human beings or spirit. Various kinds of economic support and social system play a role in reducing the poor people's pains and my role is helping people to recover God's image in them. It takes time to heal hearts and the spirit of broken families, women, and children in poverty. I believe that through the life of small community, people can be healed. This conviction makes me follow the spirit of poverty voluntarily.⁴⁰

Women activists are working not only for broad change in an unjust society but in particular for the healing of wounded women and children who are most cruelly crushed by poverty. As human beings, these brave activists also are in need. They need to find rest, encouragement, and renewed empowerment.

They are not always filled with energy, hope, faith, and love; sometimes they are exhausted, lonely, and disappointed. These women, who offer the strength and wisdom of Elizabeth to women of poverty, are also Mary and must find ways to renew their strength and vision as they seek to bring about healing and justice in Korean society.

40 Interview, In Hyung Cho.

The women I have interviewed--those women suffering the injustice of poverty and the activists who work to relieve that injustice--will be partners in bringing justice to Korean women through the liberating practice of feminist religious education. It is, therefore, crucial that I know and understand their dreams and hopes if I intend to develop a solid and meaningful theory of a liberating feminist religious education. In the next chapter, I will describe Marys' dreams as they relate to the concept of liberation.

CHAPTER 4

Mary's Dream and Its Value

The Marys of Korea desire most to have their dreams realized in spite of their socio-economic limitations. In this chapter, I will articulate the dreams that women of poverty are dreaming for the future as the contents of liberation. These dreams could shape the basic goal of the feminist religious education for Korean women of poverty.

Living Like Ordinary People

As I interviewed poor women, I asked them about the hopes and dreams they have. I often heard the words "just an ordinary life" being repeated. What they meant was that they desired simply to live an ordinary or normal life, free from the struggles and difficulties that they suffer while in poverty.

Today, two-thirds of the entire population of Korea that lives in poverty¹ are women, mostly widows, single mothers, uneducated, and unemployed or low-income people, marginalized from society and culture.² Currently, 70% of

¹ The Korean government describes the poverty line as following (1999) : If four members of family earn less than 900,000 Won (\$800), and one member of family earns less than \$250, they are considered people in poverty.

² Hye Kyung Lee, "Yeo Sung Bin Gon ui Hyun Sil kwa Sa Hoe Bok Gi Jung Chack" (The Reality of Poor Women and the Policy of Social Welfare), *Dae Ahn Sa Hoe Jung Chack Yeon Koo Soh Jung Gi Ga Ul Symposium* (An Annual Symposium Article of the Institution of Alternative Society), (Seoul: Han Kook Yeo Sung Dan Chae Yeon Hab, 2000), 5-6.

female workers are temporary day laborers. Most of them work 68 hours per week for wages that are 70% less than other day laborers, without vacation, health coverage or other workers' benefits.³ To continue daily life itself is a struggle for these women far from the "ordinary lives" they desire.

From their perspective, "basic," "common," or "ordinary" life seems "special" to them. A woman in a Minjung church says, "I want to live in a happy family like other ordinary people. For poor people like me, it is so difficult to live day by day. You would never know about our lives unless you stood in my shoes."⁴ Pastor Cho adds:

It is true. Honestly, we have a right to live like other people. All of us need jobs, three meals in a day, and a place to rest. However, even the most basic things for living have not been guaranteed for them. Therefore, we are gathering together. A matter is how we can live with right eyes to see things and life and how we can expand this idea. We are living in poverty but it does not mean that it will ruin us. Rather, we have tried to live loving, supporting, and caring for each other's life in a relationship of community.⁵

This has become a point of convergence for the women in poverty and the faith community. These women have dreams that are similar to other people's, but

3 In Soon Nam Yoon, "Yeo Sung Bin Gon Moon Gae Hae Gyeol ul We Han Yeo Sung Uun Dong ui Kwa Jae" (The Tasks of Women's Movement for Solving the Problem of Womem of Poverty), *Dae Ahn Sa Hoe Jung Chack Yeon Koo Soh Jung Gi Ga Ul Symposium* (The Institution of Alternative Society), 57.

4 Interview with Soon Hee Kim, a member of Song Hyun Sam church, July 2002.

5 Interview with In Hyung Cho, July 2002.

differ in one way: their dreams can become the dream of many within the faith community. For these women, having faith equals having hope. In that way the faith community is also a hope community for women in poverty. As the women in this community share their circumstances, experiences, and knowledge, they learn to lean on each other's strength.

Women in these shelters of faith and hope have neither a home nor a husband but they do have hope for a future which is different from the past. One woman in a shelter who carries scars of domestic violence on her face and forehead says:

The hardest thing is that I cannot support my kids like other parents. What I want is just to live happily with my kids. In this shelter, I can live with my kids. I will work hard and save money for my kids. I don't have money and home right now but someday I want to be a person who shares what I have with people like us. This is my hope.⁶

Escaping from her violent husband and living now with her children in the shelter, her hope is to be able to feed her children a bowl of warm rice and to educate them in public schools without interruption. A simple and ordinary pleasure in life is denied to them without heroic effort. One surprising thing is that women in shelters demonstrate a strong willingness to support other women and children in poverty. The hope they cling to is one they want to share with everybody who

⁶ Interview with Young Ae Nam Goong, a member of Sam Il Shelter, July 2002.

wants to overcome a painful poverty, everyone who dreams of living safely as an ordinary person.

Like women in shelters, foreign women laborers are looking not only for a job but also for legal status to be able to live as a citizen in Korea. A foreign woman laborer living in the Borderless Village speaks about her dream.

The dream that I have now is being accepted as an ordinary person. We are also people. We are neither animals nor slaves. It seems to me that our lives in this society will never be settled down. We want to live just like every other human being.⁷

An increase of wages or labor rights are secondary for these foreign laborers. To have the legal right to live like other people is their most basic concern. For people who have never felt settled, liberation is a settled life. For those controlled against their will, liberation means the right to work where they want to work. Pastor Park in this village explains the following:

Today, the people who get across a national borderline must be regarded as the economic refugees. This is a matter of the right to survival. A commodity, capital, technology, and information come and go across the nations but people cannot. We need an alternative concept respecting every single human life beyond both social welfare functioning like a bandage and capitalism based upon a principle of jungle.⁸

⁷ Interview with a foreign woman in Borderless Village. She did not want to say her name.

⁸ Interview with Chun Eung Park, July 2002.

The activists and pastors are presenting an alternative way for people who come from different countries, genders, and classes to live together with new values. There is no way to live within the existing order for these foreign laborers. The existing orders that have functioned to preserve the status quo cannot take care of the marginalized members of society.

In the interviews I have conducted, it is not hard to find ideas that arise from these new values. For example, a woman attending one of the Minjung churches speaks about the conflict a woman faces between working and caring for her children:

My husband is a bus driver whose income is not enough to support my family. For surviving, both of us have to work. In my situation, who can care for my children? It is ridiculous to force the women to care for children at home without any social recognition of the value of their labor. No matter where I work inside or outside of the home, I hope that it will be a matter of individual choice. If it is possible, I will work outside and my husband would rather be a homemaker. I do not think that liberation means something very special. I think it's just doing what I want to do, isn't it?⁹

Her idea suggests that either the society should have a child care support system, or should value domestic labor. Under these conditions, both domestic labor and social labor would be available as a matter of personal choice according to one's capacity and wishes without financial difficulty and gender discrimination. The dream the women of poverty have is related to the issue of

⁹ Interview with Nam Hee Kim, a member of Sae Ter Church, July 2002.

social reformation because their individual experiences expose social problems and contradictions.

I have found some special qualities in the dreams of “living like ordinary people” which include being without hunger, without fear for one’s survival, *without the pain of broken relationships, and without the perpetuation of poverty.* Living like ordinary people means valuing community, having the will to share, and reflecting the character of social renewal. From these spontaneous expressions of things hoped for, it is clear that their dreams go beyond egoism and cheap happiness.

Searching for an Alternative Family

While the Korean economy has grown since 1960, the gap between the rich and the poor has also grown. People in a condition of absolute poverty are *hurting even more because of increasing deprivation and the gloomy future.* The problems of unemployment, divorce, teenage crime, drug abuse, bankruptcy, suicide, alcoholism, and child abandonment have all increased, making it unlikely that the situation of the poor will improve for a long time.

Women and children have been affected by the growing impoverishment. Threats of poverty and domestic violence forced women to run away from husbands and home but they did not abandon their children. In contrast to men in shelters, almost all women in shelters are caring for their children. As a result

of their broken families, women, along with their children, develop unhealthy patterns of isolation, low self-esteem, lack of self expression, feel a sense of abandonment and suffer from inferiority complexes.¹⁰

In Korea, children from a single parent family are generally looked upon as problematic, and thus are subjected to many kinds of social prejudices. A 30-year-old woman in a shelter shares her worries:

I had run away from home over ten times because I did not want to divorce until my kids got married. However, it was too hard to endure his violence and illicit. After I moved here, I learned why my husband acted like that. I understood that he was also a victim but there is a difference between understanding and living his problems and abuse. I like being with my kids without my husband. However, when I am thinking that people are scorning my kids as kids raised by a single mother, I do not know what to do.¹¹

Poverty and social prejudice make women depressed and produce dejected children. Mi Ran Yoo, director of "Women's House" looks at this issue:

Children are vulnerable so that they have a lot of pain. When they first come, they just look tired and weak. They didn't even fight each other because of hunger. Nevertheless, they are tough and fierce due to so many tough experiences of life they have had. However, in a short time of caring, they are changing. They look like sisters and brothers in a family. They look so happy. They feel safe. My hope? This is it. If they

¹⁰ A study of the children of poverty was presented in a Korean dissertation by Myung Soon Kang. She is the director of the Leftovers Mission Center. Kang, *A Study of the Integrative Approach to Social Work and Change of Poor Children from Broken Families*.

¹¹ Interview with Jung Im Kim, a member of Sam Il Church, July 2002.

can rest, feel safe, and be encouraged about themselves like a sweet family here in the house, that is all my hope.¹²

Abandoned by fathers or mothers, they yearn for places with a home environment filled with caring and comforting. Minjung churches and women's shelters provide a caring system and offer the children various after school programs where they can feel looked after. Women are able to go to work without anxiety about their children. For many activists dealing with the problem, this is a way to build a healthy family even though there is no father present. To raise healthy children socially and psychologically, they see the need for a new supporting social structure and a new perspective on families.

In Hyung Cho, a woman pastor of a Minjung church established a local counseling center for women in her church insisting on the importance of the role of women in order to build a healthy family. She raises a question of the Christian church related to this issue:

The church should touch people's family styles. We cannot say that father, mother, and children are the basic family norm in defining what a family is any more. We need a new paradigm. The big churches have sustained and rationalized a patriarchal structure of family. Christian churches have to check that we have a real caring love toward people in broken families.¹³

She criticizes the church and society for not wanting to care for broken families.

¹² Interview, Mi Ran Yoo.

¹³ Interview, In Hyung Cho.

The phrase “broken family” has a negative value attached to it. It must be changed or an alternative definition must be provided. In fact, there is a center which suggests an alternative family system called “Leftovers Mission Center.” It was established in 1986 and has served children, teenagers, parents, and families in poor areas with the idea of serving and sharing.¹⁴ This center cares for 1,463 children who need shelter, counseling, food, and a quality education. Facilities in the center have been given optimistic names such as Dandelion Shelter, House of Rothem Tree, and Joyful House. Joyful House is especially known for educating children of poverty. Caring for children in Joyful House, Myung Soon Kang has developed an alternative system of family she calls “God’s family system.” She explains it this way:

In Joyful House, children call staff as father and mother. They call me “mommy pastor.” What they need is encouragement and support from mother figures. They do not need family structures based upon traditional concepts of blood relationships but ones that convey the message of the home environment. They need a fence and these homes provide them, by centering their family image and concepts on God. This is their new family. Here, children grow healthy, physically, mentally, and spiritually. They feel God as a feminine parent. The reason that I suggest God’s family system is that children feel shame related with their families or pedigree. The Bible says that whoever believes in Jesus, they will be children of God, doesn’t it? So I am saying to children, ‘if you love Jesus, God also will accept you as sons and daughters and God will make you very strong. We are God’s family.’ You do not know how much they love it.¹⁵

14 Kang, 6.

15 Interview, Myung Soon Kang.

Her idea is challenging and practical for women and children of poverty who do not experience themselves as beloved beings in family, church, school, and society.

An alternative or new concept of family, no matter how we name it, is the hope that reflects the reality of these women and the alternative family. This new concept needs to connect with the spirit of justice and life with communality and diversity beyond individualism. It is this concept that is life-giving for these Marys.

Acquiring Economic Independence

The failure of the economy brought the IMF into control in South Korea in the late 1990s. The radical social change brought about by IMF control of the economy added another stratum of poverty to those who were already poor, especially women who had been badly damaged in various ways. Economically, they were the first targets of lay-offs, not separate from a patriarchal culture that considers women's labor not as valuable as men's.

Women I met in shelters and Minjung churches were victims of social change both directly and indirectly. The absolute economic poverty and a sense of deprivation forced them to live in constant anxiety. Since the crisis of the economic collapse and the IMF intervention that took place in Korea, many poor people have become increasingly fearful, in many cases losing their will to live

and work. This crisis has led women pastors of Minjung churches to support the poor women, focusing on inculcating a desire to live rather than conscientizing which was a primary goal of the Minjung church movement in the '80s. Female pastors of Minjung Churches began supporting poor women by encouraging their desires to live rather than allowing themselves to lose hope and purpose as a result of the economic fallout.

In this situation, the task of financial independence was the most important issue for improving conditions for the women of poverty. Therefore, women's shelters and Minjung churches tried to connect public and government aid to create job opportunities for the women. When they participated in the interviews, most of the women were candid about their financial difficulties and their need for economic independence. One woman said, "as a woman laborer, I am proud of myself and at the same time, every single moment is so hard for me."¹⁶ This sense of hardship is mingled with self-depreciation and anxiety about the future. Jung Ja Park says:

I am working at a factory making cellular phones. I have two children, a five year old daughter and a four year old son. I learned to operate computers. I want to work where I can use my new skill. I want to be a web designer. However, who is going to hire a person like me? I am old and a married woman. Nobody wants to hire me. It is so risky to try to change my job. If I lose my job what shall I do?¹⁷

¹⁶ Interview with Ji Hae Kim at Sae Ter Church, July 2002.

¹⁷ Interview with Jung Ja Park at Sae Ter Church, July 2002.

She has to set aside her own dreams because of financial hardship. Park's self confidence is shrinking. Like Park, many women in poverty think that they have no use or value. They realize the importance of financial independence. She continues:

I always had thoughts that a woman's life depends on her husband. This was my parents' teaching. They wanted me to be good at domestic work. I was a fool. It is too late to regret that I should learn something to support myself. I am just making a little money now working in a factory. I want to be an independent woman financially and psychologically. I feel bad that I am dependent on my husband's income. Financial independence is very important!

Women in shelters are also struggling for a better life, and finances are critical. They have many reasons for fleeing from home but the most important reasons are domestic violence and financial difficulty. Sung Sook Cha says:

I have to show them that I can earn money. My husband did not bring any money home and he abused the children. My mother-in-law abused me. This is why I had to run away from my home. I have to care for my kids but I do not know how. I do whatever I can do to make money but it is too little to care for my kids. Fortunately, the shelter gives us a room to stay but for how long? I want to stand on my own. Will it be possible?¹⁸

A hope for financial independence is critical because it is directly related to food and housing and has a serious impact on one's self-esteem.

The realities of women in poverty lead women activists who are working in shelters, caring centers, and Minjung churches to do something to lift them out

¹⁸ Interview with Sung Sook Cha at Sam Il Church, July 2002.

of their poverty and sense of failure. As examples, Do Bong Women's House and Leftover Mission Center are introduced here.

The Do Bong Women's House is a support center for women and children of poverty. From 1984, Mi Ran Yoo began feeding and caring for poor children in her room at Ha Wall Gok Dong, one of the poorest areas of Seoul. Then, she met parents and single mothers and began to work toward helping women empower themselves and fight against poverty and social injustices. Her testimony shows what happened in this house:

Most of the children we cared for were living with single mothers. These women were working at factory jobs, in restaurants, or Street booths because it was difficult to find stable jobs for them. Our Women's House took care of their children in order to support these poor working mothers. Furthermore, our goal was to encourage financial independence. Single mothers needed it. One day I was thinking what if we made cosmetics for poor women. I started with 1500 Won (around \$12.00). I bought some lemons and made a skin lotion. Then, I decided to make cosmetics from natural material and grains. The price of materials was reasonable so that it was very good for the poor women. They liked to use it. After some success and failure, now we are settled in this business. Currently, 25 mothers are working for this project once a year. We call ourselves "production community." Now we have 80 stores nationwide. From the profits of this project, we built Women's House and we pay the salaries for staff and other expenditures. We are self supporting and an independent center. Most of the teachers, workers of cosmetic factory, administrative members, and volunteers in this Do Bong Women's House, have grown up in this community together for the last 17 years.¹⁹

19 Interview, Mi Ran Yoo.

Aside from financial independence, she insists that women have to be healed psychologically and spiritually.

The second example is the Leftovers Mission Center. As I have explained above in Chapter 3, this center was established by the effort of pastor Myung Soon Kang. She and the staff at this center are trying to help the women achieve economic independence. Kang explains:

Doing this work, I think the women of poverty need economic self-support and spiritual independence. Without the economic independence, they do not grow spiritually and mentally. It is not enough to educate them to fight against poverty. Real support is needed. We lend seed money. A total of about \$4,000 to each group formed with five women to start a small business and they can make it. It is an exodus from the poverty. Of course, men can borrow money from us but women are more successful. Women are very cooperative and communal! Women have an ability to endure even very small, boring, and repetitive jobs from doing domestic works. We have practiced patience, devotion, and consideration already! And we have a will to live. Those things are great sources for cooperation. Women are amazing. They are not rich but they can become independent economically and spiritually through this project. I saw this happen so many times.²⁰

In both cases, the women of poverty show that they are doing their best to overcome poverty. They have great potential to stand on their own when they get a chance to start something.

As we have seen above, in spite of women's possibilities, the women of poverty have low self-esteem. Ironically, the hope for financial independence is

²⁰ Interview, Myung Soon Kang.

connected with a sense of self-depreciation. They dream it but they do not believe their dreams can come true. They think this dream is too grand to realize. Their sense of individual inability comes from a variety of factors- depreciatory self-image, little or no education, they are married and they are older. These make them think they cannot realize their dream even though they want it. Therefore, knowing who they are is the most basic task for making their dreams real and achieving economical, psychological, and spiritual independence.

Knowing Who I Am

When I ask about their dreams, the women of poverty gave many answers including : going back to their hometown, living like other people, caring for their children in a settled environment, creating an alternative notion of family, economic independence, traveling, and so on. Among their hopes one thing is not as clear as these hopes. It is about "something." They say: "I guess I want to do something," "I want to learn something," "I feel that I need something," and "something is lacking inside of me." Then, they try to explain it. Listening to their explanations on this "something," I realize that it signals their wills to live better with more meaningful values of life. I call it the "unnamed dream."²¹ They do

²¹ "Unnamed dream" is a different word from Betty Friedan's concept "unnamed disease." In her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, women were sick because of unnamed disease, but in my term, unnamed dream will lead the women of poverty to liberation. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963).

not name it clearly but it represents hope for the future nonetheless. Between yearning for overcoming their situation and an unclear desire from their inner self, women are struggling. This is the dream to know who they are.

One staff member of an infant caring center (Noree Bang) at Sae Ter women's Minjung church, Sarah says about her dream:

I would like to study something. Something... that I can receive an answer to the basic questions about real life. I need to learn something so that I can overcome my limitations, for example, skill of conversation and human relationship. I do not know what should do I. Nurturing two children, I know that my condition does not allow me to learn something new. However, I want to learn something....²²

Struggling under her limited condition, she hopes to get an answer about the meaning of her life. A sense of failure in human relationships makes her feel that something significant is missing in her life. She expresses her desire to improve herself. Nam Hee was a laborer and now she is working at one of the Minjung churches. She also speaks of her hope:

I want to know who I am from the beginning of my life. I want to learn how to develop a good relationship with children and my husband. I do not know the way I speak, teach, and act toward my kids is right or wrong. I want to have self-confidence. If it is possible, I want to take leave about one month long from all places I belong to and want to have enough time to look at myself.²³

²² Interview with Sarah Kim at Sae Ter Church, July 2002.

²³ Interview with Nam Hee Kim at Sae Ter Church, July 2002.

She also thinks that she has a problem in building and maintaining relationships and wants to be more confident. Both women are working at Minjung churches as staff for the support programs for women in poverty. They illustrate the hope of many of the women for learning to see the goodness of life and human beings, and to value themselves in spite of their conditions. I introduce one more voice:

I want to learn a way to express myself or I want to learn something that can solve something that cannot be solved yet. This is my fifth year as a single mother. I got a divorce five years ago. I wasted three years in frustration. To me, the future was so dark, fearful, and doubtful. It was hard to get through that feeling at that time. Now I feel a little bit better. If I were trained well to stand on my own, my life would be different. Still, I have something that I want to express and speak out from deep down in my heart, I cannot. I do not know how to or why.²⁴

They are not satisfied with themselves but it is not connected directly to self-depreciation. They are just looking for some other ways to look at themselves as a mother, wife, and woman.

Different from these women are others who have very low self-esteem.

They also have a strong wish to change their lives but they are struggling between hope and despair. Pastor Kang shares her observation:

When families are in a danger of dismantling some mothers say that they want to operate on their heads. It means that they want to live as a different person who graduated from the university and had better conditions to live in. They are working very hard but in some part of themselves, they seem to hate themselves. They do not know who they are.²⁵

24 Interview with Mee Sook Lee at Sae Ter Church, July 2002.

25 Interview, Myung Soon Kang.

A will to live (hope) cannot be endured long without love for oneself. They need to know who they are no matter what conditions they have lived in.

Sometimes, women in shelters and single mothers who are exhausted due to a sense of failure, painful memories, responsibility for the children, and anxiety for their future show depression, anger, and emotional instability. Young Mee is 32 years old and a single mother of two children. She had been abused by her alcoholic and violent husband and left home. With tears she says about her feelings:

Living in a shelter, I try to be patient but I get angry even at small things. A communal life is very hard for me. I know this is the only place where I can live with my children, but I do not know how to live. I am tired and I am angry. I don't know how to deal with my anger.²⁶

The women of poverty have a lot of pain, many scars, and deep anger. They hold in their minds all the painful experiences they have accumulated and endured. How can these women possibly have a positive, healthy, and clear self-identity? How can they name clearly what they want to know? For women of poverty, to know themselves is a way to heal their pains, a way to realize their values, and a way to have self-confidence. Mi Ran Yoo talks about her hope related to this point:

²⁶ Interview with Mee Young Yoon at Sam Il Shelter, July 2002.

One thing that I really want to do is to build a dance church. I want to build a dance church because it helps women heal very fast. Healing ministry.... The women and children in poverty do not have self-esteem. They think that they are just miserable and unhappy. They need to know who they are. This is it. I do not want anything but they realize that they are precious and valuable human beings.²⁷

She also insists that dance helps them realize who they are. She believes that the dance can help women find themselves so she wants to dance with women. When women feel tired, when someone needs to be comforted, when women want to cry, when they need to celebrate, and when women need to be healed, they can dance with other women. The women of poverty want to be healed and to heal each other.

Pastor Kang points out the importance of education for young poor girls:

I think that the liberation education for women in poverty has to start at their young ages. Most of the women in poverty have lived in poverty since they were born so that they have a sense of inferiority, a lack of self-esteem, and psychological anxiety. It is hard to change them and it takes a long time for them to heal. However, if we encourage and support young girls they change tremendously. They need the liberation education. They are so thankful that they can have such a big change of life from my little touch.²⁸

It is not easy to overcome a cycle of poverty that continues from generation to generation. In order to fight against poverty cycles, both the women and children in poverty have to know themselves and their situations aggravated by classism

²⁷ Interview, Mi Ran Yoo.

²⁸ Interview, Myung Soon Kang.

and sexism. If women do not know their own self or location, they will lose a chance to fulfill their needs when an opportunity comes.

“Knowing who I am” is both a hope for the women of poverty and a goal of feminist religious education for empowering them. The voice of one of woman I met in Seoul is resonant in my ears:

As a laborer, in the past, I thought that only a material condition or social circumstance could change people. It is important, too. But these days, I feel that I need to be changed from my inner self as a woman. I want to look my self deeply. I want to know how to do it. I hope that it will bring a deeper sense of liberation.²⁹

The women’s dreams written above-- living like ordinary people, searching for an alternative notion of family, acquiring economic independence, and knowing who they are--are intertwined with sociological, psychological, and educational issues. The clear understanding of Marys in Korean society and these issues have to be reflected in building a feminist religious education for empowering women. Based upon the interviews and my reflections on them, in the next chapter, I will describe the educational principles, purposes, processes, and practices that are essential to “self-identity education,” including its biblical meanings.

²⁹ Interview with Soh Young Hong at Sae Ter Church, July 2002.

CHAPTER 5

Looking for Elizabeth: A Feminist Religious Education for Empowering Women of Poverty

As I have written in a previous chapter, a clear self-identity is the most urgent and critical need for women in order to sustain and develop their lives. Without a sense of self, other dreams cannot be established firmly. Insisting on the importance of women's sense of identity, I would like to name my feminist religious education for empowering women of poverty as "self-identity" education. It was emerged from interviews with them and internship experiences which enabled me to realize their yearnings for the transformation of self and life.

Biblical Meaning of Self-Identity Education for Women of Poverty

My idea of feminist religious education communicates with the Bible. In this chapter I will describe the biblical meanings that support my thinking. Before presenting its biblical connections, I will explore the cultural, social, and theological influences on a Korean woman's self-identity, allowing us to understand how that identity has been shaped.

First, It can be said that historically Confucian social ideology and its traditions and customs have deeply affected the formation of the Korean people's life style, attitudes, and thinking. For Korean women especially, Confucianism has played an oppressive role in the shaping of their lives.

Confucius and his disciples were men and Confucius gave his teaching primarily to and about men. Men were the primary figures in society, women were valued less than men. Women were to be subservient to men.

A woman's identity was always defined by her relationship to men. She was always wife, daughter, mother to a man. While in theory there is a fulfilling responsibility in these relationships, in practice Confucianism did nothing but confine women to these roles.¹ In Confucian culture, the most basic unit of society is the family with the father as its center. Lineage is determined from the current father figure backward into the past through his male forebears and forward into the future through his sons.² In this context, women have no chance to develop their self-identities. David W. Augsburger says:

Asian women see themselves and are seen by their societies as one component of a family, and often of an extended group related by birth and marriage. The concept of individuality, still less individual freedom, is alien. The aspirations of Asian women are directed toward their families; they seek enhanced status for the family and, above all, better family economic well-being: a bigger, better house, more and better land, financial security, freedom from worry. Individual goals are rarely mentioned.³

¹ Peggy Billings, *Fire Beneath the Frost: The Struggles of the Korean People and Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1984), 52-53.

² Billings, 5.

³ David W. Augsburger, *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 227.

In a Confucian system, a woman's place and work are strictly confined to domestic duties. She must obey and serve her father's will until she marries. Then she again must follow her husband's will and his family rules and she has to respect her sons when she is old. In addition, women are not allowed to divorce, except under a few special circumstances, for example, if she did not serve her mother-in-law well, had no children (especially male children), was lecherous or jealous, had any incurable disease, talked too much, or stole.⁴

In the past, women were not allowed formal education. Women were respected when they obeyed all the conditions of their assigned roles according to tradition, culture, and religion.

Second, there were social factors that shaped Korean women's harsh situations. From the 1960s, Korea has struggled under autocracy and industrialization. In spite of the progress of industrialization and modernization of society, women's roles were still limited. Man Ja Choi, a Korean feminist theologian, explained women's anomie in Korean society.

Most Korean husbands expect their wives to take the whole responsibility of rearing children and doing household work, and so they ignore the interests of family as a whole. Korean women are dissatisfied with this treatment. The main problem is this; the society has changed, but people's consciousness has not. Therefore, women have to take on both traditional and modern roles at the same time. These conflicting roles become a burden to women. They are in the situation of instability under the conditions of changing society. These changes in the urban middle class women's life under the industrialization program in Korea,

⁴ Billings. 5.

brought about conflicts related to the structural and psychological condition of anomie that arose in the midst of the modernization process of Korean society.⁵

This burden on women existed not only in urban middle class society, but also in the lower class as well. Women were oppressed by an industrialized society. Women's instability, tension, and anxiety derived from discrimination in a patriarchal society.

In that situation, women who were seeking spiritual satisfaction and self-identity came to the church for help. Among Korean Christians, over two-thirds are women.⁶ Why did so many women knock on the doors of the church?

They expected the church to be a place that would accommodate their situation. They needed a place to rest. They wanted to find the meaning of life and identity as human beings in the Church. With this expectation, women have always been deeply involved with the church's activities and practices. However, male-centered theology prohibited women from developing a feminist self-identity. Therefore, many women were unable to find their true selves in the church. Man Ja Choi explains:

Most Korean Christians believe that God is the Father who is head of the world and families. This conviction goes very deep into the hearts,

⁵ Man Ja Choi, "The Impact of Industrialization on Korean Women's Life and The Explosive Growth of The Church in Korea," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 114.

⁶ Ibid., 115-16.

minds, and beliefs of Korean. This masculine image of God is very authoritarian and imperialistic, and it has justified and guaranteed male dominance over women and the subordinate status of the female. Furthermore, this image of God related to the Father God is very deeply woven into worship and prayer for both men and women. Many Christians habitually say Father God more than five or six times within only one sentence when they pray.⁷

The patriarchal interpretation of the Bible established a patriarchal God in the church. Dominant male perspectives in the church have produced most of the church's doctrines and theological content. A Korean feminist theologian, Sang Nim Ahn criticizes the masculine image of God and theology:

We think about God as holy, almighty, fearful, everlasting, Father, King of kings, Lord of lords, judge, warrior, etc. In such a church, women have lost their position of equality with men and have become devalued, marginalized.⁸

The patriarchal interpretation of God and the Bible reaffirms women's identity as subordinate beings. The church wanted women to have subservient roles within the church. The teaching of the male-centered church kept many women from developing their sense of self-identity. In this oppressive environment of limited expectations and opportunities that are determined for women by men are arranged solely for the benefit of men, most women are not able to develop a self-identity.

⁷ Man Ja Choi, "Feminine Images of God in Korean Traditional Religion," in *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, N.York.: Orbis Books, 1994), 80.

⁸ Ahn Sang Nim, "Feminist Theology in the Korean Church," in *We Dare to Dream*, ed. Fabella et al., 128.

Therefore, a theory of education that aims at self-identity for empowering women of poverty must develop its biblical meanings from a feminist perspective. The biblical meanings included here, such as: recovering God's image, becoming Elizabeth, planting mustard seeds, and re-birth into one's true self were born in the context of poor women's lives.

Recovering God's Image

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."⁹

A feminist religious education for empowering women of poverty focuses on building an empowered self-identity, which is linked with "recovering God's image." It is very important to recover God's image in women's identity-building because the self-image that society offers women is distorted and powerless. They are conditioned to be subservient and submissive by tradition, culture and religion. Mary Dunn reports:

The so-called feminine attributes of self-sacrifice, silent suffering, humility and chastity are considered to be of prime importance by men, as even by women themselves. Such attributes are often theologically legitimized by various religious traditions.... They are always treated as inferior to men. Their communities have taught them to accept even

⁹ Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV).

extraordinary hardships through a system of cultural values that accepts sexual discrimination as part and parcel of life.¹⁰

Women's status is "derived," instead of being persons in their own rights.¹¹ The image of women of poverty is of someone who is ruined, hurt, and exhausted in capital and patriarchal society and in the church she is the acceptable object of exploitation and discrimination.

In Korean Christian churches, women had no awareness of having been created in God's image equal to men. Instead they were taught that woman were created to be a "helper" unto man.¹² Through a feminist religious education it is my hope that the women of poverty will be able to criticize this idea, affirming feminine qualities, improving their self-image, and recovering God's image. A pastor of a Minjung church says:

It takes time to recover God's image in women's self-image because their lives are too much hurt by individualism, competition, materialism, and patriarchal culture. Community and education are decisive matters to recover God's image. Without communal efforts and educational support, it is impossible to change women's self image. We cannot give up even if it will be a long journey.¹³

¹⁰ Mary Dunn, "Emerging Asian Women's Spirituality," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 322.

¹¹ Henriette Katoppo, "Asian Theology: An Asian Women's Perspective," in *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella, (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1980), 143.

¹² Ibid., 143.

¹³ Interview with In Hyung Cho, July 2002.

Her words affirm that the experience of community is important for changing women's self-image. In a communal and non-competitive faith community, women can learn to criticize each other, encourage each other, and comfort each other without hurting even though complete healing may take a long time.

A feminist biblical scholar, Luise Schotroff says in regard to recovering God's image, "it is to imitate God, to incorporate his justice and love into our lives."¹⁴ From her idea, the Korean women of poverty can learn that recovering God's image means not only a change of consciousness but also the integration of justice and love in our lives. Self-identity education for women has to support women enough that they will be able to grow into the power of justice and a heart of love. Therefore, self-identity education for these women is "to help them to live themselves affirming a truth that they have a right to live in God's image."¹⁵ Being created in God's image and living in God's image cannot be separated for women of poverty.

Just as the Bible says "**let us make** man in our image...(Gen. 1:26)," God's creation is a dynamic movement. In this creation story, God shows

¹⁴ Luise Schotroff, "The Creation Narrative: Genesis 1.1-2.4a," in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*. ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 36.

¹⁵ Interview with Keun Sook Yoo, the general secretary of Presbyterian Women of the Korean Presbyterian Church, at her office in July 2002.

passion and love for the creation of human beings. The biblical word “us” shows cooperation in a communal work of God for the meaningful ‘creation of human beings.’ Similarly, the process of changing women’s self should be a dynamic movement of cooperation in a communal work among women of poverty. In the movement of women’s doing to re-build their self-images, God’s image is already dwelling.

Becoming “Elizabeth”

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!”¹⁶

The story of Elizabeth and Mary in the first chapter of Luke’s Gospel in the New Testament provides an important insight into feminist religious education for empowering the women of poverty. The relationship between Mary and Elizabeth corresponds to that between two important themes in the study, namely, feminist religious education and women of poverty. While “Mary” who is deeply troubled represents women of poverty, “Elizabeth” can be said to represent feminist religious education, and her house reflects the church.

¹⁶ Luke 1:39-45 (NIV).

Elizabeth provided sanctuary for Mary. She also blessed, fed, and encouraged her, all of which were important in order to empower Mary. Through Elizabeth's caring, finally Mary was empowered to sing her song, the Magnificat. Korean women of poverty also need to be provided sanctuary as a primary context of practicing feminist religious education. They need to be blessed, to be fed, and to be encouraged by the church in order to be empowered. Then Korean poor women will sing their freedom, justice, and liberation with joy. Without the support of Elizabeth, Mary could not find her own voice and calling from God. In the same way, Korean women will find their own rights and the meaning of life through practicing self-identity education. When they, Mary and Elizabeth, meet, greet, and celebrate together, liberation is already dwelling with them. Therefore, we need to look at Mary closely because her work in the Bible represents Korean women's vision and hope for the future.

Asian feminist theologians have already begun to reinterpret a Mariology¹⁷ in order to empower themselves and provide the framework for a new theological articulation for women and the church. Their new interpretations have focused on the message of the Magnificat and Mary's role in God's liberation of the poor and the oppressed. E. N. Navaratnarajah writes in her article, "Mariology":

¹⁷ Aurora Zambrano, E. N. Navaratnarajah, Barbara Menzies, Kuk Yom Han, Emily Cheng Mei-Ling, Ruth Sinnasamy, and Maya D'Rozario wrote on Mariology in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al.

She prays in the prophetic tradition -- the Magnificat -- in which she proclaims the liberative message of salvation promised to God's people (Lk. 1:51-53). Her Magnificat reveals to us the depth of her Spirituality, her relationship with God and people. ... Mary had a perfect vision of the liberation of all humanity and the vision of a new world. This insight filled her with such joy and hope that she spontaneously breaks forth into this beautiful song of praise.¹⁸

She believes that the Magnificat announces a comprehensive change for the patriarchal order that means moral, social, political, economic, and cultural reversals. For her Mary is a liberated woman standing in the line of the strong women of Israel.¹⁹

Korean feminist theologian Kuk Yom Han also affirms Mary as the mark of God's liberation of the suffering people. Han says in her article, "Mariology as a base for feminist liberation theology":

Mary is the very agent of the Messiah's birth who liberates all the people who suffer politically, economically, and socially from the oppression of patriarchy, from political oppression and from economic poverty. Mary represents the suffering creation. Mary is the mark of the liberation and freedom of suffering people.²⁰

¹⁸ Navaratnarajah, "Mariology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 228.

¹⁹ "Summary Statement on Mariology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, 219.

²⁰ Kuk Yom Han, "Mariology as a base for feminist liberation theology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, 239.

Along with an emphasis on a new perspective of Mary, I stress that also of Elizabeth. We have to think that Mary's role could not be done by herself. We have to know that Mary's song was born in cooperation with Elizabeth's greeting, comfort, and care. There is great encouragement for women to be in support and solidarity with each other.²¹ Therefore, feminist religious education offers the means to empower women of poverty and provide the way to practice becoming Elizabeth. Korean poor women are Marys who need Elizabeth. As partners for the liberation of Korean women, they are living and growing together in the faith community.

In my interviews with them, the women of poverty repeatedly insisted on the importance of a faith community. They wanted to support and be supported by a community that sustained their lives and protected them from the vicissitudes of a capitalistic and patriarchal society. They were each looking for a community to which they could belong. There are many churches in Korea but only a few welcome women of poverty. There are many faith messages in Korean churches but no more than a few attempt to empower women.

In order to promote the liberation and freedom of women of poverty, feminist religious education must be practiced more actively and widely. Therefore, self-identity education for empowering women of poverty is a

²¹ "Summary Statement on Mariology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, 220.

movement to practice “becoming Elizabeth.” It is a new church movement. It challenges Korean church’s renewal. Through a new praxis of becoming Elizabeth, Korean churches can destroy the barrier against poor people in the church.

Planting a Mustard Seed

And he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.”²²

I was struck by what pastor In Hyung Cho shared with me regarding her view of ministry during my interview with her. It not only expresses her purpose of ministry in regard to the women of poverty but also explains the meaning of self-identity education. As the pastor of Song Hyun Sam Minjung church, she used the parable of the “growing mustard seed” to illustrate her sense of ministry. She says:

I believe that the meaning of ministry is similar to the story of growing a mustard seed in the Bible. Just a small seed is growing and it becomes a tree in which birds are resting. A mustard tree gives a hope for birds that need nests. Likewise I want my ministry to be a work of planting mustard seed and then it will becoming a tree. My faith and ability are so small but I want to plant it and cultivate it, then I want to see my ministry become a

²² Mark 4:30-32 (NIV).

tree in which women of poverty rest and plant their hope again. Then, they also will be trees for others. I confess that God works with us.²³

For women of poverty, the mustard seed symbolizes their hope, faith, worth, talent, and dream. Helping them find worth and hope, encouraging them to develop their talents, and encouraging them to spread out their dreams, these form the purpose of her ministry.

As pastor Cho said, the women of poverty in Korea are struggling for many reasons. They are hurt because of the loss of dignity and worth. Rosella C. Camte is not a Korean feminist theologian but expresses very well the causes of Asian women's weeping. She says:

Women become cheap laborers, are sexually harassed, and exposed to unhealthy work conditions. Many women are crying over the loss of opportunities that could have developed their talents, skills, and brains. Women, because they are women, have less chances for promotion or for the discovery, development, use and enjoyment of their talents and skills, and have fewer opportunities for holistic growth.²⁴

Korean women of poverty also struggle with their loss of dignity and fewer chances for holistic growth. Therefore, a self-identity education should be an effort for finding dignity and a chance for holistic growth. In order to make self-

²³ Interview with In Hyung Cho at Song Hyun Sam Church, July 2002.

²⁴ Rosella C. Camte, "Women, Why Are You Crying?" *In God's Image*, 1989, 3, 28.

identity education a holistic one, it must include two meanings in relationship to the parable of the mustard seed.

First, if one intends to plant a mustard seed, the ground must be tilled. Cultivating the ground is a transforming action; to plant a tree is to plant hope for the future. Self-identity education should be continued until women are strong enough to break the suppressed ground of Korean society.

Second, the Bible verses, "it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade..." shows the vision of a mustard seed and its function and role to other creatures. When the women of poverty can be seen to grow themselves through their feminist vision and self-identity education, it will invite other women to grow with them.

The parable of the mustard seed offers a challenge to self-identity education to transform Korean society and to give a new vision of life to women of poverty. In this vision women will play the role of healing poor women's wounds and of stretching out their hands to other wounded women and children. For them, the image of big branches represents the birth of a new family in which caring and sisterhood are growing. Self-identity education should be a place to perch with love, dignity, and support for women and children of broken families. As each mustard seed embraces its future vision, women of poverty will find their own image and vision through self-identity education.

The Re-Birth with True Self

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he (she) is a new creation;
the old has gone, the new has come! ²⁵

Self-identity education expects women to experience the re-birth into a true self which is not formed by other authorities such as: oppressive culture, religion, and tradition. Woman's true self has an ability to confront those authorities and systems. As Paul's testimony in the New Testament shows us, to believe in Christ means a new birth of a new being. To follow Jesus Christ is an action of confrontation between two different perspectives--between the Law and love, the old and the new, and the past and the future as Jesus does. Through confrontation, if anyone decides to follow Christ, s/he is a new creation of a new order, perspective, and vision. For Paul, those people were Jesus' new disciples who would build a new heaven and earth.

In the same way, Asian feminist theologians believe in Jesus Christ as the liberator who can bring about a new birth for Asian women. Man Ja Choi says:

Feminist theology has its foundation in Jesus Christ who is liberator...
The reality in which women have been excluded from the ministry and subordinated at home and in society is the result of the Christian religious doctrine asserting that only the male is an adequate symbol of God.²⁶

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 5: 17 (NIV).

²⁶ Man Ja Choi, "Feminist Christology," in *Asian Women Doing Theology*, ed. Abraham et al., 174.

Criticizing the exclusion of women from family, church, and society, Choi understands that Jesus transcends the order of authority and the customs of a patriarchal structure, and liberates women from that system.²⁷

As Korean women of poverty follow Jesus as liberator, it must be a subjective decision that is made by herself, not by another's enforcement. It is an important task for them. One Korean feminist activists says:

Women have been defined by others so long. We have to say again and again that we are owner of our lives, we are subjects, we can stand by ourselves, we have a power to do it, we have to know that.²⁸

One Asian feminist theologian, Virginia Fabella also insists:

Jesus' core message is centered on the kingdom of God. His central message focused not on himself but on God and our response to God's gift of the kingdom. Jesus proclaimed its coming and urged the people to reform their lives, believe the good news, and be saved. To enter the kingdom meant to change one's ways of behaving and relating.²⁹

Fabella is asking Asian women to actively engage and reform their lives in striving toward the fulfillment of humanity that Jesus came to bring.³⁰ As we see

27 Ibid., 174.

28 Interview with Hae Ran Kim, July 2002.

29 Virginia Fabella, "Christology from an Asian Women's Perspective," in *We Dare To Dream*, ed. Fabella and Oduyoye, 5.

30 Ibid., 3.

from two women's view, for women the subjective response is as important to effect change in their lives as was Jesus' core message for His people.

Elizabeth in the first chapter of Luke presents again the figure of a subjective woman who has a true self. The Bible says:

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."³¹

When the relatives came to her house to name her son, they wanted to name him according to the family tradition. However, she rejected it, said "No!" and knowing that her authority was in agreement with God's will, named her son with her own voice. It shows that a woman of true self acts according to her subjective way of thinking and doing. She did not allow herself to be assimilated into a given condition or authority but lifted up her idea in order that she herself would name her action.

Self-identity education is intended to offer a calling from God to restore self, equality, and freedom for poor women. Through this education they will be able to realize they are called to be confident in self and to define other relationships in which they choose to be engaged, such as cultural behaviours, traditional ideas, religious doctrines, social symbols. They will learn to know--when they are re-born to their true selves--which of these things they will choose

³¹ Luke 2:59-60 (NIV).

to pick up and which they will discard from among those previous traditions. A woman laborer says on her experience of finding true self:

Through this education and my faith community, I could find my true self. I see a purified self in me. Looking back, I was aggressive and violent cursing at my children and myself. Now, I feel I am changing. I think it is important to realize what God really wants from me. Now, I know I am precious and my children and other people, too.³²

She appreciates the value of self so that she realizes the importance of other people's lives too. A woman who experiences the re-birth of true self will embrace herself and consider that other women's lives are equally valuable. For these women, self-identity education will be a midwife for the re-birth with true self.

Self-identity education is an effort to support and encourage women to be a subject in their own lives and histories. It enables them to be born with a new self, filled with the subject identity that helps them to change their older attitude toward life in which they were passive, frustrated, exhausted, and depressed with a sense of failure, full of painful memories, worried about child-care, in an unstable life, and full of anxiety about the future. Women's authentic true self gives women a power to endure fearful situations and embrace their brokenness. When they have a strong sense of self-identity, women dare to act not only to

³² Interview with Young Soon Park at Sae Ter Church, July 2002.

tolerate and heal the pain caused by socio-cultural oppression but also to encourage other women in the world to re-birth.

Based upon these biblical meanings of self-identity education, I intend to design my theory of feminist religious education to empower women of poverty. Through the next part of this chapter, the educational principles, purpose, processes, and practical programs of this theory will be described.

Looking for Elizabeth: A Feminist Religious Education for Empowering Women of Poverty

In the last chapters, I have tried to show an urgent need for a feminist theory of religious education to empower the women of poverty in Korea. The principles, purposes, processes, and practices of education that will be included here, are practical responses to their real needs and the contexts in which they now live.

This theory that is focused on recovering women's self-identity will flow from three action principles that will bring about liberation from old oppressions, discovery of the true self which has been repressed and even lost under the burden of difficult situations. The three action principles are: "Education that intends to love human beings," "fight against poverty," and "respond to the needs of women of poverty."

Principles of Education

Principle 1. Education that intends to love human beings. This seems too general to be an educational principle, but there is a clear reason for it. I have known that pastors and activists interviewed have participated in the movements for social reformation and church renewal since the 1970s or '80s. Reflecting on the past, they concluded that some of the leaders of social movements and Minjung church movements used people as a human resource of social reformation. This was hard to admit. There was a lack of love for human beings in the process of helping Minjung stand as a reforming subject. It is also difficult to say how one can differentiate between loving human beings and making people subjects of social movements. However, it was true that the aim of social change was placed as the first task before the deep concern of individual human life. Individual emotion, idea, or action was allowed as long as it was subservient to the larger goal in the circle of social movement. It is our painful memory but it leads me to have "loving human beings" as a first principle for self-identity education.

Korea of today has changed. Its dictators are gone and the process of democracy is progressing. Many people say, "Where is Minjung? Minjung is still here?" or "Is there still a Minjung church?" My answer is emphatically 'Yes!' The political environment has changed but the economic conditions of the poor have not changed. Through the 1980s and '90s, many Minjung churches were built;

some of them have disappeared. However, there still exist Minjung churches filled with hearts of love, caring, and support that are working for people of poverty. Amazingly, or perhaps ironically, most of the pastors of these churches are women. In the past, women pastors have rarely been invited to the discussion table of the Minjung church movement due to their social status and the character of their ministry. Many of them were not ordained and they worked with poor women and children who were not directly related to the labor movement. At that time, the labor movement was considered the primary task above other social problems.

If we want to re-form society, churches, and ideas in ways that can help people to live and sustain themselves in a difficult situation, we must listen carefully to what these pastors are saying. The first principle of my practical theory comes from pastors working with Marys. Let's listen to their voices.

Pastor Myung Soon Kang says:

It is very hard to make people return from a competitive society to communal life because the influencing power of the globalization of materialism is so strong and pervasive in this society. Mothers and children in poverty cannot sustain their lives and they have been marginalized. The one-sided progress of materialism takes away a spirit of justice and a virtue of communality from the people. In this consumptive, material, and competitive society, how can women in poverty survive? In order to survive, we have to put our energy together with a right spirit. Without a heart of love and commitment we cannot change anything. Therefore, the spirit of love is most important for doing this work. We can easily find that women in poverty fell into a moral or sexual corruption when they were despaired. This is a problem of spirit. Psychological and spiritual weakness is another problem we have to take care of. In the 80s, we were conscientizing people for

fighting against the dictatorship. However, in a way, the aim of conscientization deteriorated. Humanization was missing. Somehow, we used people. Without loving human beings and without realizing the precious value of each human life, nothing will be changed.³³

According to this pastor, the practical needs--such as providing a shelter and material resources for business and caring for their children--need to be done along with the spiritual formation such as developing their abilities to know themselves, love others, and reflect on the new value of a loving community. She insists, therefore, that education with the spirit of love and commitment to poor women and children is important in order to overcome a mammonic society. At this point, a feminist religious education for empowering women of poverty has to deal with the issue of recovering spirituality.

The pastor of Borderless Village, Chun Eung Park explains his idea about a spirituality related to love and justice.

We need to recover our spirituality which is connected with justice and love. The churches have to stand on the spirit of justice and love. Justice without love brings another destruction and love without justice is a deception.³⁴

Mentioning the relationship between justice and love, he criticizes an unhealthy growth of Korean churches. While some churches have focused too much on the spiritual salvation without caring for believers' real lives, other churches place

³³ Interview with Myung Soon Kang at Leftover Mission Center, July 2002.

³⁴ Interview with Chun Eung Park at Borderless Village, July 2002.

too much insistence on social justice without caring for believers' spiritual hungers. Both of them contribute to a situation of spiritual bankruptcy in Korean churches and society. Currently, many people in Korea are committing suicide because of financial difficulty and spiritual emptiness. In order to recover the spirituality of people, the church has to serve God's people with the spirit of love and justice. It is that which will reform society, renew spirituality, and change people.

Pastors working in shelters, Minjung churches, and centers for poor women have realized the value and importance of each human being and they have tried to serve them with the spirit of love and justice. Hoo Im Park emphasizes a basic principle for serving the Minjung church as follows:

Minjung churches are developing beneficial programs and projects for residents. I try to meet people and their lives through these works. In order to make this work not as a business but as a ministry, the most important principle or condition will be 'loving human beings.' I focus more on people's lives than programs. I have learned that people are changing when their hearts are touching through the ministry.³⁵

She adds that programs give knowledge, information, and convenience to poor women but it cannot change their hearts. To change one's heart is a long-term project, a process of education. This valuable education is also dependent on people whose minds are filled with loving people. Therefore, building a feminist

³⁵ Interview with Hoo Im Park, July 2002.

religious education for empowering poor women has to be a loving work which means caring for real lives, analyzing contexts, supporting needs, touching hearts, and helping them attain self-confidence. The loving for human beings is the most basic principle that encompasses these tasks.

Principle 2. Education that intends to fight against poverty. A feminist religious education for women dreams of an existential change for woman. The educational dimension helps a woman speak about her dream, find her self-value, and deal with the problems of poverty. It seeks a transformation of condition by means of a change of existence. This education should support women in attaining their dreams, which are living like ordinary people, re-conceptualizing family, reaching economic independence, and knowing who they are.

The education for poor women can be understood as a healing process of the distorted self. The problem of poor women is a problem of the distorted self, shaped by two conditions, a socio-economic condition of poverty and a patriarchal culture of sexism. These two issues cannot be separated. This is the reason why feminist religious education for poor women has to deal with the problem of self and poverty at the same time. Myung Soon Kang shows it:

“Gongboo Bang” is different from other after-school programs. It plays a role as an agency of the urban poor areas. Through this center, we have tried to not only care of problems of children but also for the problems of their parents due to poverty. The poverty is transmitted to the next generation. In order to solve problems of children we can not

ignore the other related issues. This is a local community movement. We need an education empowering women and children for fighting against poverty. The education of young poor children is important. They are also struggling with a sense of inferiority. We have to empower instill in them a sense of confidence.³⁶

If the first principle of education, 'loving human beings' insists on the love toward each individual person at a personal level, the second one emphasizes fostering the power to fight against poverty. Poverty can be beaten by the communal power of poor women because their poverty is not caused by their individual laziness or personal destiny.

The power to overcome poverty and the distorted self will be nurtured through an educational practice filled with a new value beyond egocentrism materialism and patriarchal culture. Hoo Im Park says:

Our movement intends not only a change of social condition but also a change of being. In a capital society, we need a different value. Jesus shows a new perspective beyond his social relationship and condition. He is a symbol of new value. We need this spirit. I have a hope that this small community will change nature, society, and human beings. It is hard to live as an individual being in a capital society but it is good to live in a living community which respects human lives.³⁷

Therefore, a feminist religious education for empowering poor women needs to carry concerns about communal growing for subduing poverty and realizing self.

36 Interview, Myung Soon Kang.

37 Interview, Hoo Im Park.

Principle 3. Education that intends to respond to the needs of women of poverty. Centers, churches, and shelters for women of poverty are providing programs based upon their needs such as guitar classes, acupuncture, literacy, English, and Chinese, recycling of daily necessities, children's programs; Gong Boo Bang (an after school program for children and adolescents), No Ree Bang (caring program for three to five year old children), and Tahgga Bang (caring program for infants and toddlers), and so on. Besides these programs, poor women have expressed their dreams and hope through the interviews (described in Chapter 4) and those dreams have to be reflected in the process of forming an education for them.

Feminist education for women of poverty should not be identified with public education that fails to give students a learning motivation in a learning setting, to help learners have hopes for their future, to bring them a creative imagination. It means that the system of public education is neither responding to learners' needs nor concerned about learners' contexts. Rather, learners are forced to win in a situation of unlimited competition disconnected from their personal dreams or goals. The only permitted goal is set by the admission committee of the university. Public education is degraded as just a passing channel for a few privileged people's success and perpetuation of their dreams and of the status quo. In this competitive society, women and children of poverty are left behind.

Is this a curse or not on poor women? As long as they retain a sense of failure that is the result of their lack of education and a supportive family, it will be a curse to them. However, if they find a new way to empower themselves, it will be a chance to find the will to live. Feminist religious education for poor women is an effort to change this curse into a blessing. To realize this, we must respond to women's needs for their lives as a third principle.

Building a theory of feminist religious education for empowering poor women is a way of designing education. It is a contextual education because the purpose, process, and practice of education reflect women's needs and realities.

Purpose

Since I have worked with various women's groups such as an internship in Korean churches in Seoul, Bible study with women at the church, dialogues with a women's group at Claremont School of Theology and so on, I have realized that women are blessed as bearers of life and hope even though they have struggled in the difficult situation of a patriarchal culture. When they have been touched by an educational practice conveying feminist perceptions, they experience that women can make a difference in their lives. Among various experiences with women, I have focused my primary interest on the liberation of poor women. I am motivated by two reasons.

One is that to encourage poor women to be liberated is related directly with the reformation of a Korean society in which they have been victimized and marginalized mostly due to the two fundamental social problems, sexism and classism. The other is that by building a practical theory of religious education for empowering poor women I will contribute to the universal task of 'liberation of women' which is progressing through each contextual feminist theology--feminist, womanist, mujerista, and Asian feminist theology. This is why I want to build a feminist religious education that will empower poor women and focus on "self-identity education." As the title of this paper declares, the purpose of feminist religious education for women of poverty is 'empowering' women.

As the relationship of Elizabeth and Mary has shown, women of poverty are empowering and empowered by each other. For empowering each other these women need to restore their self-identity. Multiple identities of poor women such as mother, wife, and woman laborer restrict their roles and limit the formation of their self-identity. The multiple roles that women are forced to play in society, the church and the home shape women's identity as helper, care giver, and assistant. They have rarely held positions and images equal to those held by men in society and church. However, I have found that poor women can go beyond the confinements of their prescribed roles to live out their lives in ways congruent with their self-identity. This takes place through the work of restoring

their self-confidence. This confidence will be strengthened through the efforts of a feminist religious education.

For empowering poor women, the goal of restoring self-identity will be discussed with its three-dimensions; self-awareness, self-possession, and self-empowerment.

Self-awareness means self-realization. Women of poverty realize their reality in the process of self-awareness. They need to know the false or negative images they have held, to analyze socio-economic, political, cultural, and religious matters which have formed women's inappropriate images, and to confront these false images which must be broken. Their instability, tension, and anxiety are derived from discrimination against women in a socio-economic condition of 'poverty' and a patriarchal culture of 'sexism.' Poor women have lost their self-identity in this situation. They need to recover their self-identity. It is not easy process.

When women begin to realize their status in society, they often suffer an identity crisis and feel anger toward an oppressive society and culture. In the past, when they thought their miserable life was caused by personal limitation and fatuousness they accepted it as a fate. However, when they began to realize that unjust society and patriarchal culture have caused them lose self-confidence and have kept them in poverty, they came to see themselves as victimized by the social structure. Self-awareness frees women's attention turn

from a false understanding of life. This is a transformation of self. Through self-realization, poor women can change their self-consciousness that will bring with it a change in their attitude toward life. Their fatalistic feelings must change into the power to change their fate and their anger turned into energy to bring about justice and liberation. In the process of self-awareness, poor women come to know that justice and liberation will not be given to them without their own efforts. Thus they understand other poor women's status and try to comfort and empower each other. They know that it is a way to get out of the depreciatory self-concept and redeem their miserable lives.

When poor women begin to realize these things, they celebrate the process of self-awareness. Women of poverty expand their awareness from self to society, church, and the world.

Self-awareness invites poor women to have self-possession. This idea involves the ability to stand apart from self-depreciation. With low self-esteem, women of poverty have always given themselves away for others, surviving through self-sacrifice. Self-possession encourages poor women to have a time of self-caring. This goal is related with the idea of 'subjective knowledge' in the book, *Women's Ways of Knowing*. At this position of subjective knowledge, quest of self, or at least protection of a space for growth of self, is primary. This

often means a turning away from others and a denial of external authority.³⁸ Women of poverty need to find their value of self and possess it, not depending on any other authoritative social ethics, traditions, or cultures. In this way they will acquire the capacity for autonomy, self-esteem, and self-caring. Women of poverty need to empower each other, as a way to achieve self-awareness and self-possession. In the past, they did not know the value of their own experiences of poverty, suffering, endurance, and pain. It does not mean the pain itself is valuable. Rather, it means that the integrity of spirit they brought to these experiences and the inner wisdom they gathered from these experiences are precious and valuable. They already know how to share what they have, how to heal poor people's pains, how to comfort their despair, and how to wipe tears from people's eyes. It can be expressed either as empathy or solidarity among women of poverty.

In fact, when I affirmed the value of their experiences the women had more courage to speak out their painful stories and that moment was a place to empower with cry and laughter among poor women. For poor women, the most important thing of self-possession is to affirm themselves that their experiences or embodied wisdom are valuable. When poor women affirmed their

³⁸ Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Godlberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 134.

experiences as valuable, they changed their sense of self from victims to agents who can empower each other and bring justice to people and society.

Therefore, self-empowering is an important dimension of the purpose of feminist religious education for women of poverty. Poor women nurture each other in a faith community. They are empowered through empowering each other. This is done by sharing their similar experiences. The experience of hunger, of discrimination, of loneliness, of frustration, of joyful moments and sadness can be a place to feel empathy and solidarity with each other. Feminist religious education has to design ways toward self-empowerment--not only through sharing experiences but by becoming conscious of the wisdom that emerges from the women themselves.

Process and Practice

Through experiences during my internship and interviews with the women, I had a chance to weave a tapestry with two strings that I have had, commitment to religious education and the poor. Reflecting upon my experiences, I analyzed reactions, changes, and improvements in their lives based upon perspectives of classism and feminism. In this part, I will describe the process of transformation which is empowering to women and the practice that I have reconstructed from the internship experience with poor women named "self-reflection" program. I invited women to join me for the purpose of

completing a scholarly internship project for the religious education program at Claremont School of Theology. Depending on the contexts of the women involved, various programs can be created.³⁹

Through the internship project and interviews with the women engaged in churches and centers that I visited, I have found that they have a yearning for four kinds of transformation: The women are thirsty for change; they yearn for a new and better reality, they long for the expulsion of the patriarchal myth, and they long for hope. I could see four distinctive and characteristic yearnings emerge out of the over-all process. These characteristic yearnings are a “thirst for change: motivated participants”, “awakening to reality: social analysis,” “expulsion of myth: getting self back,” and “finding of hope: commitment to action.” I would like to apply these four to the educational process to create practical programs for empowering women.

Identifying Thirst for Change: Motivated Participants. From interviews with the women, I have realized that according to their individual situations in life, they have been overwhelmed by multiple problems such as their economic difficulties, their unstable social status, their inability to take proper care of their

³⁹ Including these practices from the internship project and the interviewing process with women of poverty, I find that they want to learn about music, art, computers' skills to communicate with children and adults, and Korean culture--especially, for the foreign women laborers--due to the lack of education. In addition, those women in shelters express the need for therapy for alcoholism and psychological depression, healing programs for abused women and children, and anger management programs.

children, their sense of hopelessness about life, the domestic violence they have endured, and the oppressive restrictions of a patriarchal culture. These problems cause the women great psychological anxiety and spiritual exhaustion. Despite these enormous obstacles, poor women have refused to let go of what they call their unnamed dreams. They do not name their dreams clearly but the dreams represent their hopes for the future. They want something to change and they want themselves to be changed. For them, change means a transformation. Their transformation of self is related to acknowledging their present reality. They have been thirsting for change. They can learn to understand their present reality and also learn the process of bringing about change through the whole process of education. As part of a healing and learning process, each process will enable them to clarify their unnamed dreams into knowing who they can become and where they can go in the future.

Throughout our meetings, I used various programs based upon feminist perspectives for helping women explore deeper levels of self-understanding. The following practices were followed to create the first practical program of education.

Drawing a Historical Line of Individual Life and Sharing Life-Stories

This program will be appropriate for the first meeting. In order that they can get to know each other, I ask women to reflect on their lives for five minutes and then to draw a time line of their lives. I offer some guides such as the following:

- Draw a horizontal line.
- Divide it into three parts and mark three dark points on this line.
- Mark points on the line, if you remember special events, facts, and memories in your life. (These points can be marked with a type of symbolic picture and with words related to memories.)
- Tell your stories on these points and explain what kind of events made you divide your life.

By reflecting and sharing their stories women can get to know each other and even themselves. Sometimes women tell a story they may not have reflected upon before and it yields information about herself that until now had been hidden even to her.

Sharing Symbols

Women bring items to the meeting that symbolize themselves. In a case of empty hands, it is good to make available papers and makers with which to design symbols. I ask them to explain how or why they chose the particular

symbols for their self-images. With items or the drawn symbols, women explain what the symbol means and how this symbolic image relates to her self. From this practice women begin to realize that they have tended to have negative self-images. (Of course, there are exceptional cases.) If they find this negative tendency in their images, I encourage them to think and speak briefly about the causes. The causes will be discussed in the next section on social analysis.

From the beginning the poor women who attended showed an active response and a desire for participating in the program. At that time, I could actually feel the women's yearning to learn and their thirst for change. It was their strong energy that prompted me to name this first process 'a thirst for change.' This response is different compared with other meetings attended by upper-middle class women, who in fact were hesitant during the first few meetings. Their hesitation began with a feeling of embarrassment about sharing their private things in a "formal sphere." In addition, they admitted to a feeling of fear of the unfamiliar vocabulary: liberation, feminism, and woman's self. Some worried that change would take place in their thoughts and lives as a result of the meetings.

On the other hand, the poor women showed a thirst for change. They said "I am eagerly anticipating the next meeting," "I want to change," "I wish I could find my self," "I do not know but I want to be happy," "I hope that this meeting will give me an opportunity to see my self." I quickly came to realize

how eagerly they want to find themselves and how long they have waited to love who they are.

This thirst for change is not a result of personal limitation but is a longing of women who have been excluded from social support. They have not had such an opportunity before and can only gain from it. Middle class women have a great deal invested in their present privileges and any change, even if for the better, has the possibility of costing them those gains. It is hard to form conceptions of knowledge and truth which can empower poor women because such conceptions that are accepted and articulated today have been shaped throughout history by the male-dominated majority culture⁴⁰ and the invisible social discrimination of women of poverty. Norma Alarcon points out:

DeBeauvoir demonstrates how a female is constituted as a "woman" by society as her freedom is curtailed from childhood. The curtailment of freedom incapacitates her from affirming "herself as subject." Very few women, indeed, can escape the cycle of indoctrination except perhaps the writer/intellectual because "she knows that she is a conscious being, a subject." This particular kind of woman can perhaps make of her gender a project and transform her sexual identity. But what of those women who are not so privileged who neither have the political freedom nor the education?⁴¹

40 Belenky, et. al., 5.

41 Norma Alarcon, "The Theoretical Subject(s) of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminist," in *Making Face, Making Soul: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*, ed. Gloria Anzaldua (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Book, 1990), 360-61.

They have struggled enough under circumstances of curtailment, incapacitation, and lack of privilege so that they want now to experience a transformation.

The thirst for change not only provides an active motivation to learn something new but also creates an environment that encourages poor women to draw out the voices of one another. The members of women's groups had different personalities, voices and experiences based on their particular life histories and circumstances, but they tried to open their hearts through the meetings as they shared experiences, stories and their lives. I discovered that by expressing their individual experiences, they began to trust each other beyond the differences in their lives.

The thirst for change opens them to the communal sharing of their experiences and allows them to release their pains and the shadows of their past that they had buried in their hearts for a long time. This point is where a feminist pedagogy begins to emerge. Women's courage to share their pains and shadows is the first sign of transformation. Opening of the heart of one woman empowers other women to share their experiences. This is why feminist pedagogy is communal and transforming. In the company of other women, they are able to confront the reality that they want to overcome and heal the pains they have never expressed. As poor women, they find that they share similarities of pain and agony. Through this communal conversation, they

express their yearning for change and realize that they are motivated participants of transformation. The thirst to change provides a way to create friendship, trust, mutual acceptance, encouragement, sympathy, and sisterhood among them.

This communal sharing helps them understand the bigger picture of the causes of their painful experiences and realities: namely poverty and the patriarchal culture. Women understand that their pains and oppressions are rooted in these social problems. They would like to cut off these tragic heritages by their own power for the next generation. This realization leads to the next process of awakening to reality.

Awakening to Reality: Social Analysis. Women of poverty living in multiple crises frequently express feelings of frustration and anxiety. In a patriarchal and capitalist society, they are the most vulnerable beings. One of the most prominent struggles the women shared is their feeling of entrapment in their present life. In order to break out of the trap and to avoid further injury, they need to explore in depth their feelings and the context that caused such feelings.

Women of poverty need support in order to be able to confront these realities through a process of social analysis. They need to know they have a right to be happy and that they have value as human beings. The process of awakening to this reality will lead these women to look at how their sense of self has been formed in relation to social circumstances.

“Awakening” for these women emerged out of continuous sharing and discussing life with hope for change. This opened onto an analysis of reality and a realization of the treasures to be found in their inner selves. Women of poverty need to develop social analysis in order to deepen their realization of reality.

As a result of participation in the project group meetings, women began to tell stories of their own individual lives. Storytelling is a powerful method to bring out women’s realities. Hyun Kyung Chung says:

Women from various backgrounds gather and listen to one another’s stories of victimization and liberation.... The power of storytelling lies in its embodied truth. Women talked about their concrete, historical life experience and not about abstract, metaphysical concepts.⁴²

Chung believes that, because of their embedded truths, stories provide a step towards liberation. I also believe there is a positive role of storytelling for awakening to reality. Women of poverty have a great number of stories about their lives. Some stories are remembered, and others are forgotten.

Listening to other women’s stories, telling their stories, responding to stories, and analyzing stories, women of poverty discover the meanings and the cause and effect of their lived realities. When listening the women discover the diversity and richness of their combined experiences. These reveal their similar

⁴² Hyun Kyung Chung, 104.

hopes, joys, angers, sufferings, disappointments, and achievements. Not just for the process of awakening to reality, but also for defining who and where they are, storytelling is a good method for authentic dialogue among poor women. The dialogue enables them to realize their own situations as the oppressed, and it convinces them to act for liberation as subjects.

This process occurred while we were writing and sharing journals. The motivated participants began to open their minds and I encouraged them to meet with their individual selves through writing journals. For example, one of the women wrote her family history in her diary and shared it with us. She lived in a demilitarized zone between North and South Korea until she got married. Living with a violent and alcoholic father and watching her beaten mother, her life was a torture. Due to this domestic violence her brother became damaged psychologically and she and her family hid it as a shame. In our sharing, she opened it up and we cried together. Women tried to name the causes that formed their painful life experiences. Through all the discussion and responses from women, she realized that her family was a victim of patriarchal culture within a divided nation. Then she decided to help her brothers' therapy without a feeling of shame. After she had shared her painful story, other women began to unfold their stories as well. From the telling and listening, crying and laughing, comforting and encouraging that occurred among the women, I felt the power of authentic dialogue.

The programs in the phase of awakening of reality are the following.

Writing and Sharing of Journals

I emphasize to the women the importance of individual time, space, and an allowance even it is a very small amount of money. Women need to reflect on their lives, so I ask them to write notes or journals, to bring and share them so they can hear other women's ways of reflection, their daily experiences, problems, agonies, struggles, and hopes.

After sharing journals, I ask them the following questions:

- What is your hope?
- What are the obstacles to fulfilling your hope?
- How do you try to overcome these obstacles?

With these questions in mind, women discuss factors that have obstructed their hopes at various levels-- individual, social, political, cultural, economic, religious, and so on. We plan strategies that can be used for overcoming various kinds of obstacles. I encourage them to make a list of obstacles according to each levels and then ask them to plan possible strategies corresponding to each obstacle.

Study of Church Law

Because of lack of education and information, most Christian women do not know the status of woman in the church and what it means for them.

Therefore, it is very important that women study Church law. Studying church law, the structure of the church, and the status of men and women in the church, women are startled to realize what they know and what they do not know, what they ignore and how they are ignored, and what they need and want to know.

Practicing Silence

I ask women of poverty to keep silent for a few minutes but do not mention the length of time. After a few minutes have passed, I ask them to share what they felt and what they thought during the period of silence. The purpose of this is to understand what silence means to women of poverty. I explain two kinds of silence that women have to deal with. One is a compulsory silence that women have to break which is forced by sexist culture and tradition. The other is a contemplative silence that women can practice for their spiritual growth.

Historically, Marxist analysis, Latin America's liberation theology, and Paulo Freire's process of conscientization or subjectification have tried to analyze socio-political realities from the perspectives of the poor and the

oppressed but they have failed to take into account the historical oppressive force of sexism.⁴³ Women of poverty have to read the world in a different way based upon feminism and classism. To be 'poor' and to be 'woman' should not be conditions that prevent the realization that oppressive and unequal realities exist. They should not prevent one's grasping a self-identity, or having a consciousness of oneself as a subject. On the contrary, as poor and as women they should engage as subjects of a feminist process of awakening to reality. Even though Freire's idea does not provide the means to analyze situations from a woman's perspective, his emphasis on a critical recognition of an oppressive situation is still available to them. He makes the following observation:

To surmount the situation of oppression, men must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity.⁴⁴

Recognizing the causes of the oppression is a process of social analysis that is not an optional task but a necessary educational task for women of poverty.

When poor women examine how unfairly the social system and the culture have dealt with women, they will also see how injustice has permeated

⁴³ Alacon, in *Making Face, Making Soul*, ed. Gloria Anzaldua, 361.

⁴⁴ Freire, 40.

society and history. Then the women can name themselves as subject, not as other. When women of poverty employ a comprehensive analysis of all the systems and structures that affect their lives the roots of oppression will be uncovered. They will also discover that the roots of oppression are interrelated and reinforce one another.

As a subject who is awakening to reality and grasping social analysis, poor women move on to the process of expulsion of myth.

Expulsion of the Myth: Getting Self Back. The members of a women's group that I worked with have struggled with social prejudices. They speak out against the restrictive roles between man and woman at home, at church, and in society. They named their negative self-images as women, their compulsive life style as wife and mother, and people's disregard of women of poverty. To build a healthy self-identity of poor women, these prejudices must be rejected.

In order to reject them, I borrow the concept of 'expulsion of the myth' from Paulo Freire. He introduces a stage of expulsion of the myth as characteristics of the pedagogy of the oppressed. He writes:

The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and become a pedagogy of all men in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted. In the first stage this confrontation occurs through the change in the way the oppressed

perceive the world of oppression; in the second stage, through *the expulsion of the myths* created and developed in the old order, which like specters haunt the new structure emerging from the revolutionary transformation.⁴⁵

In the same way, I use the myth as old negative structures of woman's individual self and society that have been used to oppress women. Therefore, the expulsion of the myth is an indispensable process toward a transformation of women of poverty. It means the expulsion of the tradition, culture, ethic, and ideology that define women's roles and images negatively.

On this issue, Maria Harris also stresses women's action for overcoming past myths. She says, "Equally important, we need to start exercising the power of disbelief."⁴⁶ The power of disbelief denies the previous "myths" which are false teachings and "lies" told to and about women. She explains more about the "lies":

These lies are familiar to most of us: That we are weak, while men are strong. That we are the heart in society, while others are the head. That we cannot appear to be too powerful or too smart or we'll either be told we're uppity regularly we will be condemned to loneliness and no one will ever love us.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Freire, 31-32.

⁴⁶ Harris, *Dance of the Spirit*, 17.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 17-18.

According to Harris, women have to be free from lies because the false teachings are not true even though the lies have been maintained for a long time. One result from lies, false teachings, and myths is that women hate themselves and other women. She writes:

At times when women have been unreflective, or have not learned to love themselves first, they have, unfortunately developed the truly terrible and terrorizing capacity for hating themselves and other women. Systems in society as a whole have put women in competition with one another--whether we are mother and daughter, co-workers, or doctor and patient--and then have taught us to blame one another--never the system--for our pain.⁴⁸

The oppressive myths teach women to blame and compete with each other. In fact, some women of poverty express a feeling of self-detestation reproaching themselves for their miserable situation which is not even caused by their faults. These myths and the social prejudices that flow from them play a role in the lives of poor women. They prevent them from beginning the process of becoming independent. Some women in shelters think it is easier to endure their husband's abuse than to be socially scorned as an unfortunate woman.

Without a social, cultural, psychological support system, women easily lose the will to break the myths. Therefore, overthrowing lies and myths which have been taught and have oppressed women of poverty is a common task for

48 Ibid., 8.

them. Mary Elizabeth M. Moore explains this idea of a feminist formed education ministry. She says:

A feminist-formed educational ministry would not simply focus on disseminating information, but would utilize methods of critique, reconstruction, and re-mythologizing. The traditions also need continuous re-formation; too often they have been patriarchal and oppressive to women, to other oppressed peoples, and to the earth.⁴⁹

In the context of her meaning, my practical theory of self-identity education to empower women of poverty can be a part of a feminist-formed education ministry.

Then, how can Korean women of poverty change the false teachings, lies, and myths against them? "Critical thinking" will be used for critique, reconstruction, and remythologizing of previous negative myths. For the transformation of self and society, women of poverty have to doubt, to question, and to criticize all prejudices, lies, and myths in an oppressive culture and society.

About critical thinking, bell hooks says, " 'critical thinking' was the primary element allowing the possibilities for change."⁵⁰ For hooks, critical thinking plays an essential role in her "engaged pedagogy." She explains:

⁴⁹ Mary Elizabeth M. Moore, "Feminist Theology and Education," in *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*, ed. Jack Seymour and Donald Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 76.

Engaged pedagogy has been essential to my development as an intellectual, as a teacher/professor because the heart of this approach to learning is critical thinking. Conditions of radical openness exist in any learning situation where students and teachers celebrate their abilities to think critically, to engage in pedagogical praxis.⁵¹

Women of poverty have rarely been engaged in conditions of radical openness to celebrate the ability to perform critical thinking. In Korea and even in the church, criticism is regarded as a rebellious and a dangerous thing, especially, when it comes from the oppressed. On this point, an idea expressed by Elizabeth Dodson Gray is appropriate. She points out:

Male-reflective Christian theology is not innocent. It is deeply implicated in the history of the creation of patriarchal structures of male power in the home, in the church, and in the structures of economic, political, and social power in the wider culture.⁵²

Christian tradition has functioned as one of most effective means for legitimating and even promoting women's restriction.⁵³

⁵⁰ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 202.

⁵¹ Harris, *Dance of the Spirit*, 8.

⁵² Elizabeth Dodson Gray, "Feminist Theology and Religious Education" in *Theologies of Religious Education*, ed. Randolph Crump Miller (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1995), 200-01.

Therefore, women of poverty cannot expel myths without raising questions about existing social, cultural, and religious systems and taking risks by making a space for criticism. The following programs can be utilized in the process of the expulsion of myths.

Stories of Forgotten Women

I ask women to try to remember women's stories that they have not thought about for a long time, but which have influenced them both positively and negatively. I want them to see a bigger picture of life by remembering their foremothers. This practice gives women a good opportunity to define women of poverty and to reflect on what has shaped them into who they are now.

The Bible Study

I select women's stories from the Bible and write the name of the book, chapter, and verses for each story on the small piece of paper. Each paper has one story of a woman. I select women's stories in the Bible such as: the stories of Tamar, Jochebed, Jephtah's Daughter, Levite's wife, Mary, mother of Jesus, Sick women, and Mary Magdalene. I ask each woman to choose one piece of

⁵³ Joann Wolski Conn, "Dancing in the Dark: Women's Spirituality and Ministry," in *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development*, 2nd ed. ed. Joann Wolskin Conn (New York: Paulist Press, 1996), 12.

paper, read the Bible verses that are written on it, and share the story with other women.

I suggest principles for this practice as follows:

- Read the Bible verses in silence without any previous idea of the story.
- Read the Bible verses in silence one more time using your name instead of the heroine's name of each story.
- After reading the Bible, tell the story using "I."
- Audiences are listening to each story as though it were the narrator's own story as a way to distance themselves from their previous understanding of the story.

Through this practice, women understand women's stories in the Bible as similar to their own stories. Many are moved by strong emotions evoked by the stories: sadness, anger, surprise, frustration, confidence, joy, celebration, and so on. Some women realize that the church does not teach women's stories in the Bible through women's eyes. Others are surprised that the Bible includes a great number of women's stories that can provide positive models for women.

Finishing Sentences

By finishing sentences as a way to communication, women of poverty share their stories (storytelling). Some sentences that I use come from Maria Harris' book, *Dance of the Spirit: the Seven Steps of Women's Spirituality*.⁵⁴

Sentences include the following:

- I think my strong points are...
- I think my weak points are...
- I think my greatest points are...
- I think my greatest fear is...
- I think one of the best things I have done is...

These sentences give opportunities to share women's stories and reflect themselves.

When they hesitate to criticize the existing society and church, the transformation of self-identity will be delayed. These critical practices give women opportunities not only to expel the myth but also to have self-confidence. The process of expulsion of myth guides women of poverty to have a dream for the future through the present struggle by reflecting on the past critically.

⁵⁴ Harris, *Dance of the Spirit*, 177.

Finding of Hope: Commitment to Action. Finding of hope means women's commitment to action because they discover their hidden potentialities (hope) which have been oppressed and covered by patriarchal social prejudice and internalized self-depreciation, for developing themselves, empowering other women, and transforming society. These potentialities are their hope for the future and formed through women's gatherings based upon a feminist perspective. Through educational programs including the process of evaluation, women decide to commit to action.

Evaluation and Making Action List

Evaluations can be done at the end of each meeting or the end of the whole education process. At that time, the leader will encourage the women to make a commitment to some definite action whether on a small or large scale. In the evaluations, women can share their feelings, reflections, comments, questions, critiques, and hope for the program and the whole process. When women express their hope and vision during the period of evaluation, the educational leader must not miss the opportunity to jot down their hope on an individual note or board.

After the evaluation process, the facilitator asks women to form a plan of action to realize their hope. At this time, the leader divides their hopes into an individual and a communal hope. Then, they continue with the process of

discussion, recommendation, and suggestions for each other for resolving problems and reaching their hope. Each woman can make for herself a list for individual action and communal action from this process. That many ideas, strategies, and plans are beginning to bloom can be heard in their own voices.

I brought out this fourth process “finding of hope” from their evaluations⁵⁵ that were conducted in 2000. In 2002, when I visited Sae Ter Church where I had done my internship project with poor women in 2000, it was good to see the progress of their lives. They were working based upon their plans that they had made two years ago. Women’s action engaged evaluations are shown in the following statements.

Ha Kyung--Participating in this group, I realized that I was a precious being even though I was living an indolent life just as a pregnant woman. I came to have a willingness to search for work for my self and others from now on. In addition, I am interested in the local currency movement. (Things, products, and abilities are used as currency, instead of government produced money, in some parts of the economic life for those people who have a willingness to share this idea in the local community.)

⁵⁵ The evaluations of women are based on my notes of the participants’ statements.

When I met her again in 2002, Ha Kyung, mother of two children, has not yet started her local currency movement, but she was doing individual research for healing children's atopic dermatitis using natural foods. Her first daughter has struggled with a severe skin problem and one day, she saw one mother who had the same pain in the subway. That lady's daughter was also crying and scratching her body. She realized that many people struggled with the same problem and she decided to do something, other than just depending on medicines. Her daughter's skin got better and she shared her experience with people who needed the information. Her action did not end here. She studied by herself about organic natural food and its influence on health. Then, she organized one group of women in this church in order to spread her idea. Her individual decision and action become a motive for establishing a "Green Market" in this church. Through the Green Market, neighbours and members of Sae Ter Church sell and buy natural goods and foods, or exchange goods for daily life. It is very small and opens once or twice a week but members of church are very proud of doing this work.

Sun Hee--It was a real nice time to reflect on myself. Especially, when I talked about my mother and grandmother as forgotten women, I could see myself in a new light. It was a good frame to see myself. I came to understand why I sometimes have treated my children violently. I was aware of the need for cutting off the negative inheritance that was formed by the patriarchy. (Her

grandfather had a concubine because her grandmother did not give birth to a boy.) Now I understand my foremothers' lives. I do not want to continue my burden into the next generation.

In 2002, when I met her again Sun Hee looked better and more healthy. She started to work again and stopped spanking her children. Using her experience as a laborer, now she is working on the staff of a different Minjung Church. She works in that Minjung church but her membership belongs to this Sae Ter church because it is a women centered Minjung church. She said that "They have very different perspectives on solving problems. They do not have a concern for women laborers for planning projects so that I cannot be a member of that church. However, I am continuously challenging that church (the church at which she works) as a woman." She realized the value of a poor women's experience and concretized her belief while doing her work. Beyond these two women's cases, many things have happened and changed in these women's lives because, through feminist pedagogy, poor women learned how to practice action and reflection. Despite experiencing failure and success, they do not give up their practical praxis for individual and social transformation.

Shinwha--When I started to have a feminist idea, I, as a woman, wanted to be the same as a man and to live without a gender identity. Further, I pursued the image of a man rather than the realization of womanhood. I thought that

would be the way to reach equality between men and women. However, the self-compulsion that I had to work and act like a man was a burden to me. I wanted to escape from the sense of weakness and victimization. Our meetings have given me consolation. They have given me a chance to accept my existence, whoever I was and whatever I did. I came to accept my gender identity through sharing our stories and experiences. In addition, what I would like to do is work with a particularity as a woman as long as I have a sense of solidarity among women.

Mae Hee--There were a lot of programs to find "self" around me, but they resulted in failure. From these meetings, I found the cause of the failure of those programs. I was never faced with the facts which have existed in my life. Our group gave me an opportunity to heal myself, and I started to see myself with self-satisfaction and self-affirmation. I have waited for programs like these.

Soon Shim--I am glad to have participated in this meeting. My life will be changed. Before this meeting, I was concerned about others' eyes upon me. I was attentive to what people said about me, while I just stayed at home and the kitchen with two little kids. Now, I feel fine and I respect myself. I decided to have a long-term plan for my life step by step. I learned how to respect my self and found what things are important for me. And I shared my feelings and thoughts about our meeting with my mother. Looking back on my mother's life,

she has insisted on things that she has done for her children. I want her to have her own life and joy from now on. I think it is not late for her. However, it is real hard to make an understanding between the two generations.

Soo Min--Individually, I have lived with a difficult problem that could not be shared with anyone. I thought that my individual problem had to be solved by myself. (She is a member of another Minjung church which is located nearby. She is struggling with a dilemma between confronting her husband's constant unfaithfulness and keeping it to herself because of his leadership in the labor movement.) From the first meeting, I felt light and wished I could be healed through this group. I was not disappointed. Now I believe that the community is our power. I will share my experiences and beliefs from these meetings with my church.

Hee Sun--Before I participated in this meeting, I was fine. Attending this group, I started to feel an unnamed suffocation. I asked myself: Am I a real woman? What are the things that I have to do? Where am I supposed to stand? Can I exist without my husband and children? Am I an independent being? Through these meetings and this program, I have started to answer these questions.

Shin Bee--I love this group, for we can share our weaknesses, pains, and experiences. I found that we, each of us, are individual beings but our

problems or issues do not come from our individual situations. There are many causes that make women weak in this society. We have to overcome them. I understand that an individual is social and political. I feel a duty that I have to share the meaning of this women's meeting in different settings of women.

Ja Kyung--I believe that God prepared this meeting for me and us. I will change my attitude toward women colleagues in the work place. They always felt a competition with each other. I hate it. I did not have any attachment with those women who were just flattering to the higher officers before I tried to do something with them to build a good relationship among the women. I am repentant for that. These meetings taught me the necessity of solidarity and sisterhood between women. No matter who we are, what we have, and how we live, we are socially weaker.

Through the process of feminist religious education for women of poverty, they find hope which can empower them to build self-identity, to design a concrete plan for their future, and to commit to action for the transformation of society. They found a hope that they realized they had eagerly wanted to find and for which they had waited in order to act in a meaningful way. It was their unnamed dream of the past and now they could give it a name. Knowing who they are will be a basis for making their dreams come true.

In the process of self-identity education, poor women find power in communal empowering. When they share their experiences and problems their pains are reduced and their joys are increased. They find a sisterhood with whom to share tears and laughter--like Elizabeth and Mary. Wiping tears and sharing laughter is not the end of the power of communal sharing. They make decisions individually and communally for action and commitment for the liberation of women, just like Mary's Magnificat.

Women of poverty find hope for re-building their traditions and histories. They could find new meanings that they have never imagined through the remembrance of forgotten women's stories and diving deeply into women's stories in the Bible. Reflection on not only the women's stories in the Bible, but also stories of women of today and the past enables them to have hope for re-building women's tradition and history. They are able to discover forgotten women's history. Reflecting on self by sharing women's stories, writing journals, contemplative silence, and dialogue with fore-mothers made them feel each other's pains and sufferings. They found hope in being able to accept themselves just as they are and to embrace their fore-women's lives just as they existed, no matter what was good or bad. They find hope for blooming a new seed and a new spirit of feminist solidarity. When they reveal the sufferings and celebrations from inside, they are able to feel solidarity as women.

The self-identity education that comes from the meetings involves “concrete persons,” “real stories,” and “passionate hearts” and goes beyond an abstract knowledge for maintaining the status quo. This illustrates the uniqueness of feminist religious education for empowering women of poverty in Korea. This educational theory is born from the context of Korean poor women. Our lives and communities are laboratories of action and reflection for making a practical theory. The theory that does not have its own context and community does not need to reflect on whether or not it supports people's liberation. Many theories and theologies can be created in tables but not many of them can touch the people's lives and change the world. The Korean women's lives and reality is a womb of Korean feminist pedagogy, of “self-identity education.” It has the power to change poor women and they will challenge the theory. This theory and Korean poor women will grow together because it is communal, contextual, and consistent.

Through this chapter, I have written about self-identity education as a theory of feminist religious education for empowering poor women according to five categories: its biblical meaning, educational principle, purpose, process, and practice.

First, the biblical meanings of the self-identity education show an importance of communication between the feminist education and the Bible. Today, Korean churches should develop its eyes to interpret the Bible from a

feminist perspective, changing from patriarchalized churches to equalized churches concerned for those Marys such as the oppressed, the poor, and women.

Second, the value of three action principles of education is that these principles were born in and have been deeply engaged in the context of poor women's lives which have been repressed under the most difficult situations. These principles hold the meaning that they pledge to respect human life and they reflect the negative experience that makes social change the first task. These three principles intend to animate and change the people who want to participate in the practice of self-identity education for empowering women.

Third, purpose, process, and practice of the feminist education that I designed carry poor women's pain, joy, struggle, freedom, dream, and vision in the way of self-empowering. It makes women rethink their past experiences, reflect about their daily lives, and bring a commitment to action toward the future overcoming the present fear and hardship of life. I dream that this educational effort encourages poor women to speak out boldly their identity and visions for the future of their lives, the church, and society and to feel able to move away from being victims of oppression into a discovery of their power to reclaim their dignity and determine their destiny.

Furthermore, the Korean church has to find new and positive directions through the feminist religious education to overcome patriarchalism, materialism,

individualism, and expansionism which do not have life-giving energy. As Korean women, our works are particular, because we start this work from our own experiences and situations. I believe that this particularity is a way to achieve the liberation of the whole human family.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

My Dreams Have Led Me

Story of my first dream. Since I have come to the United States, I have had nightmare dreams caused by depression. In my dreams, I run desperately to avoid being captured by a policeman who wears a white helmet and blue jacket. I reach the end of an alley filled with smog, tear gas, the sounds of screaming, and the stamping of policemen. Then I wake up filled with pain.

Story of my second dream. When my course work was almost done, my body and mind were exhausted. One night, I dreamed a beautiful dream. Dr. Mary Elizabeth Moore visited me, and clothed me in a beautiful dress, which was sky blue with colorful flowers embroidered on it. She held my hands and danced with me. Her smile and the beautiful sound of music embraced me.

Story of my third dream. I was struggling to write the proposal of this dissertation; my head was full of the theme and ideas but I did not know how to organize them. One night, I dreamed an unforgettable dream. In my dream, I was part of an audience watching a woman who was walking alone and looked very sad and tired. Finally, she arrived at a house and knocked on the door. Then, the door opened. A lady came out, and she welcomed the woman giving

her a big hug. They looked happy, their faces shining. I woke up realizing the women were Mary and Elizabeth from the biblical account.

I will never forget these three dreams. I know that the dreams will be as a lighthouse for my life's journey.

The first dream is one that I do not want to dream again but it is unforgettable because it reminds me to remember the lessons that I learned from the tumbledown situation of the 1980s in Korea. It tells me to live for the spirit of justice and freedom. The second one healed my pain and empowered me to endure the process of a doctoral study. The third one helped me weave my thoughts with integrity. In this third dream, I understood that Korean women of poverty were like Mary and it was my responsibility to focus on creating a practical theory of feminist religious education for empowering them just as it was Elizabeth's task to empower Mary.

Looking back to the years of my 20s and 30s, Minjung theology challenged me theologically and Asian feminist theology and Western feminist religious education ideas taught me about feminism. These academic challenges gave me important insights for doing theology but I did not feel satisfied that those insights alone would help me to formulate a practical theory for women of poverty. It led me to listen to their voices more closely and to reflect on our experiences more deeply. I believed that clues of feminist religious

education for women of poverty would be found from the women themselves and myself reflecting together on our experiences of the past and of today.

My interviews and an educational (internship) project that I conducted with them were both successful. Those two projects became the most basic and important grounds for writing this dissertation. Feeling strongly a need for religious education for women of poverty, I have become convinced that it should be combined with self-identity education to empower them.

The first chapter as an introduction shows my motivations for writing this dissertation based upon my experiences and vision. It includes problems, methods, limitations and the contributions of this work.

In the second chapter, I critique theological ideas and feminist theorists that have influenced me and informed my thinking in the perspectives of feminism and classism. Minjung theology, Asian feminist theology, and Western feminist religious education theory were critiqued. In addition, I demonstrated the need for a feminist religious education in Korea.

In the third chapter, I tried to define women of poverty. Comparing the Minjung theologians' descriptions on Minjung, I have written about their existence and lives just as they are. I focused on their lived realities rather than forming a theological and social definition of them. I understood them as the Mary's of today and described their lives by using four categories that identified their contexts. These are: outcasts, women in shelters, foreign migrant women

laborers, children of broken families living in poverty, women in multiple crises, and activists who choose poverty voluntarily. I visited women's shelters, women's Minjung churches, counseling and caring centers for women and children of poverty. I talked with women about their lives, problems, hopes, dreams, fears, agonies, worries, oppressive experiences, and feelings. Through interviews with women of poverty, I have come to know that their dreams for the future were too concrete to refer to them as a 'dream.' I wrote about this in the fourth chapter.

Their dreams were related to their real life situations filled with shortages of income, homes, food, job opportunities, health care, social status, education, family relationships, information, entertainment, hope for the future, and self-confidence. Korea has developed a kind of democratic system; however, in the patriarchal culture based upon Confucianism, that system continues to promote the unbalanced development of a local economic system, and the enlarged gap between the rich and the poor. Of these, women of poverty are the most marginalized and oppressed people. Under these circumstances, developing a support system and policies for them are secondary tasks. Their dreams cannot exist away from the issues of their survival. Their dreams-- to live like ordinary people, to have families different from theirs of today, to obtain economic independence, and know themselves as strong individuals-- these are their

dreams that illustrate their realities. As I described their dreams in the fourth chapter, I wrote about these realities and the contexts in which they have lived.

In the fifth chapter, I introduced a brief historical and cultural background of critical matters which have shaped the lives of Korean women. Negative factors within the current social conditions play a role in creating a distorted self-image for poor women. By allowing women to articulate and understand their dreams, the work of the education for women of poverty can play a vital role in the effort to get them to reclaim their true selves. The biblical context for this educational work will create a place of dialogue among the faith community, women of poverty, and theology. I selected four biblical passages to which I applied the process of re-interpretation and an analysis of the interviews and presented them through the education project. The four biblical meanings are: recovering God's image, becoming Elizabeth, planting the mustard seed, and the re-birth of the true self.

Painful experiences of women of poverty are individual but the causes are not individual but rather social, cultural, and political. This means that in order to heal their pains and scars women of poverty need to work and support each other because in doing that they create the beginning of a new social, cultural, and political order. Their common struggle will give them the confidence each individual woman requires to be born as a subject of self and life. Furthermore, it will expose the particular situations and problems of women of poverty. Out of

this communal work of education focused on building their self-identity, these women will empower the muted life experience of selflessness and powerlessness of many other Korean women of poverty. Once they are empowered their muted voices will be heard and their oppressed self will be liberated.

In Chapter 5, I have formulated a practical theory of religious education for women of poverty focused on re-affirming women's self-identity using insights gained from my internship project and interviews with them. I am convinced that in the process of providing this education we can heal our wounds and create our own identity. We need to re-affirm self-identity in our lives so that we are able to overcome the oppressive situations we have lived in. This is a new vision, our vision, one never given to us by church or society.

The principles of education that I suggested in chapter 5 show the characteristics of this practical theory. Without love for human beings, without the power to break through their oppressive circumstances, without a genuine response to the concrete needs of women of poverty, the theory of feminist religious education cannot be called "practical." In order to develop a theory that is relevant to their lives, to encourage them to participate in the process of transformation of society, and to support and sustain their lives with their children and families, the women must find ways to share their painful experiences, memories, and stories. In this way they will create a sisterhood beyond the

individual life space, and become able to confront sexist tradition and myth. In this way they will understand that their poverty is not their fault so that they are able to embrace themselves in passion and compassion. This educational process helps poor women to reclaim self-identity. This educational vision is formed with concrete ideas of purpose and process, which are inter-related in a practical program.

As women of poverty, our works are particular, because we start our feminist pedagogy from our own experiences and situations. When we speak out boldly our identity and visions for the future and make a decision to move our senses and feelings away from being victims of oppression and toward being able to reclaim our dignity and true values, we surely will be re-born as a subject of ourselves, society, and history. Until this vision becomes ours, we cannot stop our journey of looking for Elizabeth.

Appendix

Interview Questions

Activists

1. What do you think who poor women are in Korean society?
2. What is your hope doing this work?
3. What is urgent thing for poor women?
4. What does liberation mean to you and poor women?
5. Do you have any education program for women?

Women of Poverty

1. What do you do for a living?
2. Why do you come to this shelter or center?
3. What is the most difficult problem or thing?
4. What is your hope for the future?
5. What do you need? Or what do you want to do?

Bibliography

Books

Abraham, Dulcie, Yvonne Dahlin, Stella M. Faria, Sally Moses, and Sun Ai Lee Park, eds. *Asian Women Doing Theology: Report from Singapore Conference, November 20-29, 1987*. Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, 1989.

Ahn, Byung Moo. *Minjung Shin Hak Yi Ya Ki (The Stories of Minjung)*. Seoul: Han Kook Shin Hak Yeon Koo So, 1988.

Anzaldua, Gloria, ed. *Making Face, Making Soul =Haciendo Coras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminist of Color*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Books, 1990.

Augsburger, David W. *Pastoral Counseling Across Cultures*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986.

Belenky, Mary Field, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Godlberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule. *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*. New York: Basic Books, 1986.

Billings, Peggy. *Fire Beneath the Frost: The Struggles of the Korean People and Church*. New York: Friendship Press, 1984.

Brenner, Athalya, ed. *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*. Feminist Companion to the Bible, 2. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.

Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development. *Presence of Christ among Minjung: Introduction to the UIM [Urban Industrial Mission] in Korea*. Seoul: CISJD, 1981.

Chung, Hyun Kyung. *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990.

Conn, Joann Wolski, ed. *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development*. 2nd ed. New York: Paulist Press, 1996.

Fabella, Virginia, ed. *Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity: Towards a Relevant Theology: Papers from the Asian Theological Conference, January 1979, Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1980.

Fabella, Virginia, and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, eds. *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology: Reflections from the Women's Commission of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989.

Fabella, Virginia, and Sun Ai Lee Park, eds. *We Dare To Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women*. Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, 1989.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing, 1989.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1963.

Greenwood, Davydd J., and Morten Levin. *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998.

Han Kook Sihm Hak Yeon Koo So, ed. *1980' Han Kook Minjung Shin Hak ui Jeon Kae (A Development of Korean Minjung Theology in the 1980's)*. Seoul: Han Kook Shin Kak Yeon Koo So, 1990.

- Harris, Maria. *Dance of the Spirit: The Seven Steps of Women's Spirituality*. New York: Bantam Books, 1989.
- _____. *Women and Teaching: Themes for a Spirituality of Pedagogy*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.
- Harris, Maria, and Gabriel Moran. *Reshaping Religious Education: Conversations on Contemporary Practice*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- Hess, Carol Lakey. *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Hong, Sang Tae. *A Historical Investigation of Missionaries to Korea and Their Influence on Modern Korean Protestantism*. M.A. thesis, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif., 1998.
- hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Kang, Myung Soon. *Bingon Haechae Gajung Ahdongyi Byunhwa mit Sahoe Bokgie Tonghapjuckin Jupkun Yungu (A study on the Integrative Approach to Social Work and Change of Poor Children from Broken Families)*. M.A. thesis, Seoul: Kangnam University, 2000.
- Keely, Barbara Anne, ed. *Faith of Our Foremothers: Women Changing Religious Education*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.
- Kim, Yong Bock, ed. *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*. Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1981.
- Lee, Yeon Ok. *Daehan Yeasugyo Jangro Hoe Yoejundo Hoe Baekyonsa (A History of 100 Years of Korean Presbyterian Women)*. Seoul: Sinang Kwa Jisungsa, 1998.

- Maguire, Patricia. *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach*. Amherst: Center for International Foundation, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, 1987.
- Miller, Randolph Crump, ed. *Theologies of Religious Education*. Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1995.
- Moore, Allen J., ed. *Religious Education as Social Transformation*. Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1989.
- Moore, Mary Elizabeth. *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method*. 2nd ed. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998.
- Neuger, Christie Cozad, ed. *The Arts of Ministry: Feminist-Womanist Approaches*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.
- Park, Andrew Sung. *Minjung and Pungryu Theologies in Contemporary Korea: A Critical and Comparative Examination*. Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, Calif., 1985. Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, 1997.
- _____. *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Park, Cheon Eung. *Kook Kyung Upneon Mauel I, II* (The Borderless Village I, II). AanSan: AanSan Shelter for Foreign Workers, 2000.
- Seymour, Jack, and Donald Miller, eds. *Theological Approaches to Christian Education*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.

Sugirtharajah, R. S., ed. *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology*. New York: Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994.

Westfield, N. Lynne. *Dear Sisters: A Womanist Practice of Hospitality*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001.

Winter, Miriam. *Women Wisdom: A Feminist Lectionary and Psalter: Women of the Hebrew Scriptures: Part One*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1991.

Articles

Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). "Globalization and Spirituality: Towards a Holistic and Proactive Response." [Workshop paper]. Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) 2000 People's Forum: People's Action and Solidarity Challenging Globalization, Workshop on Globalization and Spirituality, Seoul, October 16-19, 2000.

Camte-Bahni, Rosella C. "Women, Why Are You Crying?" *In God's Image*. [Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology], March 1989, 28-29.

Fabella, Virginia. "Asian Women and Christology," *In God's Image*. [Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology], September 1987, 14-20.

Lee, Hye Kyung. "Yeo Sung Bin Gon ui Hyun Sil kwa Sa Hoe Bok Gi Jung Chack," (The Reality of Poor Women and the Policy of Social Welfare). Dae Ahn Sa Hoe Jung Chack Yeon Koo Soh Jung Gi Ga UI Symposium (Annual Symposium Article of the Institution of Alternative Society). Seoul: Han Kook Yeo Sung Dan Chae Yeon Hab, 2000.

Web Sites and Resources

Hanshin University; available from <http://www.hanshin.ac.kr>.

Methodist Theological Seminary; available from <http://mts.ac.kr>.

Nam Yoon, In Soon. "Yeo Sung Bin Gon Moon Gae Hae Gyeol ul We Han Yeo Sung Uun Dong ui Kwha Jae" (The Task of the Women's Movement for Solving the Problems of Poor women); available from <http://www.women21.or.kr>.

National Statistics Office, Korea. Korean Women's Development. "Institute Statistics of Economically Active Population by Type of Household and Sex"; available from <http://www.2.kwdi.re.dr>.

Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary; available from <http://www.pcts.ac.kr>.

Policy and Information Center for International Solidarity. PICIS Special Series on Globalization and Korean Women: Part 1: "The Scape-Goats of Economic Crisis: The Consequences of the Economic Crisis and Neo-Liberalist Policies on Korean Women Workers." PICIS Newsletter, Issue 78, Dec. 19, 2000; available from <http://picis.jinbo.net>.